

**THE PROCEEDINGS**  
**of**  
**The South Carolina**  
**Historical Association**  
**1980**

WILLIAM S. BROCKINGTON, JR.  
W. CALVIN SMITH  
Editors

USC - AIKEN  
THE SOUTH CAROLINA  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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### CONTENTS

The Fiftieth Annual Meeting . . . . .	iii
Benevolence in Colonial Charleston. . . . . BARBARA ULMER	1
Controlling the Poor in Colonial Charles Town . . . . . WALTER J. FRASER, JR.	13
Commentaries on "Rich and Poor in the Port City". . . . . THEODORE W. CART & GEORGE B. PRUDEN, JR.	31
The Public Career of Nathaniel Barksdale Dial . . . . . JERRY L. SLAUNWHITE	36
Prisoners All - The Slave and James Louis Petigru . . . . . LYON G. TYLER	55

## CONTENTS

Commentaries on "The Distinctive Carolinian". . . . .	73
MARVIN L. CANN & JOE P. DUNN	
South Carolina's First Negro Seamen Acts: 1793-1803. .	78
GEORGE D. TERRY	
Neglected But Not Forgotten: Henry M. Howell and The "Police Control" of Slaves in S.C. . . . .	94
JOHN DAVID SMITH	
Commentaries on "Slavery and Race in South Carolina". .	111
ARNOLD SHANKMAN & EDWARD L. COX	
Prohibition in South Carolina, 1880-1940	
An Overview . . . . .	118
FREDERICK M. HEATH & HARRIET H. KINARD	
South Carolina Newspapers and American Foreign Policy in the 1890's. . . . .	133
ROGER P. LEEHUIS	
Commentary on "Shaping Forces in South Carolina" . . .	148
WINFRED B. MOORE, JR.	
Index to <u>Proceedings</u> , 1976-1980 . . . . .	153



# MINUTES

## South Carolina Historical Association

### Annual Meeting - 1980

The Fiftieth Anniversary Meeting of the Association was held on April 12, 1980, on the campus of the University of South Carolina at Columbia. After registration and coffee at 9:00 A.M. in the lobby of Gambrell Hall, the Business Meeting convened at 10:15 A.M., President Carlanna Hendrick presiding. George Curry welcomed the group to the campus, as did John Scott Wilson, speaking for John Sproat, head of the History Department.

Daniel W. Hollis announced the establishment of the John Porter Hollis Award, which will be presented to the author of the best article in the Proceedings every four years. The first prize committee will consist of Lewis P. Jones, E. M. Lander, and George C. Rogers, Jr.

The officers for 1980-81 were elected:

President: Jamie W. Moore (The Citadel)  
Vice President: John B. Edmunds (USC-Spartanburg)  
Secretary-Treasurer: A. V. Huff, Jr., (Furman)  
Executive Committee: Rodger Stroup (S.C. Museum Commission)  
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Two morning sessions assembled at 11:00 A.M. Ted Cart, Francis Marion College, chaired the session entitled, "Rich and Poor in the Port City." Barbara Ulmer, USC-Columbia, presented a paper, "Benevolence in Colonial Charleston," and Walter J. Fraser, The Citadel, read a paper, "Controlling the Poor in Colonial Charles Town." Cart and George B. Pruden, Jr., Presbyterian College, commented. Marvin Cann presided over the session, "The Distinctive Carolinian," and Jerry L. Slaunwhite, D. S. Freeman High School, Richmond, Virginia, read a paper, "Nathaniel B. Dial." Lyon G. Tyler, The Citadel, presented a paper, "James Louis Petigru." Cann and Joe P. Dunn, Converse, commented.



After lunch, two afternoon sessions convened at 2:00 P.M. Arnold Shankman, Winthrop, presided over the group devoted to "Slavery and Race in South Carolina." George D. Terry, USC-Columbia, presented a paper, "South Carolina's First Negro Seaman Acts: 1792-1803," and John David Smith read a paper, "Neglected But Not Forgotten: Henry M. Howell and the 'Police Control' of Slaves in South Carolina." Shankman and Edward L. Cox, USC-Columbia, commented. A second session, "Shaping Forces in South Carolina," was chaired by Winfred B. Moore, The Citadel. Frederick M. Heath, Winthrop, and Harriett H. Kinard, Greenwood, co-authored a paper, "Prohibition in South Carolina, 1880-1940," followed by a presentation by Roger P. Leemhuis of Clemson, "S.C. Newspapers and American Foreign Policy in the 1890s." Moore and Joseph Tripp, The Citadel, commented.

At 3:30 P.M. Daniel H. Pipes of S.C. ETV presented a preview of two new segments from the South Carolina History series. A lively discussion followed. At 5:00 P.M. the Association was entertained at a reception in Gambrell Hall, and at 6:00 P.M. the Annual Dinner was held at Faculty House. Lewis P. Jones of Wofford briefly sketched the history of the founding of the Association. Federal Judge Matthew Perry addressed the group on his participation in the civil rights struggle in the state in the 1950s and 1960s.

A.V. Huff, Jr.  
Secretary-Treasurer



## BENEVOLENCE IN COLONIAL CHARLESTON

Barbara Ulmer

Colonial Charleston is most often depicted as the center of luxury, leisure, and learning of the southern colonies, but there was another side to the elegant city. As the seaport grew in population, the number of urban poor also increased to the point where humanity and the desire for order demanded that some public provision be made for them. Since Charleston was unincorporated until after the Revolution, the city lacked the necessary institutions through which to dispense poor relief, so the task fell to the parish. The leaders among the rising planter-merchant elite, despite their reputation for self-indulgence and hedonism, felt an abiding responsibility to the community. By serving as vestrymen and churchwardens they assumed a role of stewardship over the poor. The impulse behind both public and private benevolence among the colonial gentry stemmed from pride in their budding metropolis, a sense of noblesse oblige, a desire for public order, and a spirit of humanitarianism fostered by economic abundance and their religious beliefs.

The colony adopted their concept of public relief from the English Poor Law. As early as 1695, the Assembly recognized the need for public assistance to the colony's poor and called for a board of commissioners to manage the gifts of charitable citizens. Since private donations proved insufficient to the growing need, three years later the Assembly levied a tax for the support of indigent citizens. A third revision in 1712, changed the complexion of the system by replacing the colony-wide tax with the British custom requiring each parish to be responsible for its own dependents. This lifted the burden of Charleston's urban poor from the outlying parishes and stimulated the growing sense of community among townspeople.<sup>1</sup> In Charleston's St. Phillip's parish, the vestry administered the poor relief, while the churchwardens served as the Overseers of the Poor, assessing parishioners according to their land, slaves and money at interest. Control over the poor fund gradually allowed the vestry to enjoy one of the only forms



of local autonomy since they were not directly accountable to the Assembly. Initially the fund was small, only £625 in 1732, but by the time of the Revolution, the vestry allocated £14,000 a year.<sup>2</sup>

The designation of the St. Phillip's vestry as dispensers of poor relief further enhanced the power of the planter-merchant elite in Charleston society. While election as a vestryman or churchwarden demanded a great deal of work and sacrifice of time, the position also signified recognition as a local leader and town father. Quite a few merchants sought positions on the vestry to bolster their social status. It seems that those men who were rising to prominence and elected to parish offices in the late 1730's and early 1740's exhibited a greater attachment to the community by serving the longest terms. Men like Thomas Smith, George Seaman, and Benjamin Smith, who were vestrymen for at least eighteen years were first elected in either 1740 or 1741. The fabulously rich Garbriel Manigault faithfully held offices in St. Phillip's parish for sixteen terms as vestryman and twenty-two as firemaster. Seventy-five percent of those elected served multiple terms. Participation in the local government came to be expected of those with leisure and social standing, just as membership in the Commons often was regarded as a requisite service to the colony.<sup>3</sup> A gentleman could be excused for a small fine, but a feeling of responsibility to the community seldom allowed it. Robert Pringle reflected the popular attitude in his observation that while the role of churchwarden was "an office which is attended with some Trouble,...there is no Dispensing with it as it comes in Course." With no town meetings or other municipal institutions, Charleston was governed largely by those possessing what Pauline Maier described as an "immediate sense of local sentiment."<sup>4</sup>

As the Colonial Assembly looked to the English for legal precedents, the rising colonial gentry also adapted the relationship of the British gentry to the poor. The colonial "mimetic impulse" has been well outlined by Jack Greene and is reflected in the Charlestonians' paternalistic approach to charity. The founders of the Charleston Library Society, many of whom served on the vestry, stated as one of their aims the desire to make themselves "worthy of their mother country by imitating her humanity, as well as her industry." Later, when the first of the German Protestants bound for the new Backcountry townships arrived



in the city, William Bull, the South Carolina born lieutenant governor, commended the Committee of London for their generosity in sponsoring the immigrants and suggested that since their benevolence "demands our praise, it will, I am certain, engage our imitation."<sup>5</sup>

The recognition of poverty as a social problem and the allocation of poor relief did not cause the indigent to be regarded as social outcasts. Still, their dependence upon the parish and the community wove them into the fabric of Charleston society. In their role as mediators between the unfortunate and the vagaries of life, the vestry thus became an extension of the Assembly and the Governor who was seen by some as ruling "his people with the tenderness of an indulgent parent." Each petitioner for assistance had to appear and face the vestry as he asked for help. The poor were treated as individuals and given aid according to their need. Private citizens accepted them into their own homes in return for a subsidy from the parish, even after an almshouse was built. The parish also supported orphans in foster homes, placed children with apprentices and oversaw their treatment, and in an attempt to break the poverty cycle sponsored schools for children. A special section of St. Phillip's was reserved for the poor who worshipped along with the rest of the community. The symbiotic relationship between the poor and the colonial elite strengthened the "social glue" and helped create a society described by visitors as "open hearted and exceeding most....in acts of Benevolence, Hospitality, and Charity." In one symbolic incident, the Commissioners of the Market, also parish officers, discovered local bakers using unfair scales and confiscated nine hundred loaves of bread which according to the Gazette, they distributed among the poor "with their own hands."<sup>6</sup>

The tremendous prosperity enjoyed by South Carolinians encouraged their easy acceptance of the poor. In Charleston, with its large slave labor force, the idle were tolerated more readily than in the labor-starved Backcountry where the Regulators proposed in the 1760's that the poor either be forced to work on farms or be whipped out of the country. In addition to a harmonious social climate, the "altruistic political ethic" described by Robert Weir encouraged the accommodation rather than the isolation, of the poor into the society. Henry Laurens implied that concern for the indigent was a political priority and an indication of



civic maturity then he enthusiastically described Charleston's progress into a New World metropolis by noting "we are regulating our Port and Harbour, going to build a sumptuous Exchange and Customs House, extending fine streets...building a new Hospital and enquiring into the State of the Poor."<sup>7</sup>

The formalization of the system of poor relief meant that charity was no longer given indiscriminately. While paupers were generally accepted as part of the society, a difference clearly existed in the public mind between those worthy of benevolence and those who were not. The parish vestry took their role as distributors of public funds very seriously and carefully interrogated each claimant in search of signs of moral delinquency. The poor were perceived in two categories: the virtuous poor, most frequently women and children of the parish families who had no breadwinner, and those "idle, vagrant, and vitiously inclined people" who either came with the shipping trade or drifted in from the Backcountry and who usually were considered as having brought impoverishment upon themselves through drink and riotous living.<sup>8</sup>

From the existing parish records, paupers receiving public monies fell into the same two groups identified by Jean-Pierre Gutton in his research into the poor of pre-industrial Lyon. The first group, the structural poor, represented the most numerous under parish care. Their petitions in the vestry's minute book repeat the same sad stories of congenital poverty: the very "old and antient," the "weak and infirm," the "Lunitick," the orphaned, the abandoned, the widowed. This class usually found refuge in the workhouse where they received food, clothes and lodgings.<sup>9</sup>

The second group suffered from "conjectural poverty." These supplicants belonged to the class of respectable, hardworking poor who eked out a subsistence living on their own, but always tottered on the brink of destitution. They lived a day-to-day existence unable to set aside any money for emergencies. When this delicate balance was disrupted by illness, changes in the economy such as inflation, unemployment or the birth of another child, they had to ask for temporary help. The parish was usually willing to assist anyone who suffered from such accidents of fate. A classic case is that of David Duncan who was merely walk-



ing down the street when he was "much hurt by a trunk being thrown upon him out of a burning house." The vestry allocated funds enabling him to travel to an Edinburgh specialist and hopefully be restored to his former health. Perhaps an anonymous letter in the South Carolina Gazette best described the type of circumstantial poverty that caused the assessment for the poor to increase from £5000 in 1762 to £8000 in 1770. Signed only "A Trader" the letter complained of the problems of monopoly and depression in 1765 and predicted that "we shall soon be obliged to build more Alms-houses to receive our poor distressed inhabitants; for it is past a Doubt that an Industrious Man, who does not earn Thirty or Forty Shillings in the day (and few do that) cannot possibly pay house rent, cloath and feed his family and pay Five pounds out of his poor pittance to purchase a cord of firewood and that ill-measured too."<sup>10</sup>

During the 1730's the vestry petitioned the Assembly to build a workhouse for institutionalization of the poor. The idea of housing public wards in one location appealed to the vestry because the building could serve as a hospital for the sick, reduce the expense of boarding the poor in private homes, remove the beggars from the streets, and also give the vestry a chance to further regulate and survey the morals of their charges. The workhouse in Charleston differed considerably in conception from the English model. In England, the workhouse served as a device to control the large number of unemployed and vagrant who traveled about the countryside. It was perceived as a place of punishment and means of subduing a disorderly class. However, in Charleston, the almshouse, as it was also called, provided a haven of sorts for the poor who had nowhere else to go. The parish hired a doctor for the institution who provided medical care even for the poor of other parishes. Rather than incarcerating the unruly in the workhouse, the vestry promptly removed anyone causing a disturbance and sent them on their way. In one typical incident, the vestry expelled Joanna Kelly and Hester Thompson for "disorderly conduct" and prohibited them from begging in Charleston under threat of jail. Only in the case of notorious Mrs. Hogg who constantly gave the vestry trouble was there record of an indigent being "kept at hard labor."<sup>11</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Assembly granted the vestry's request in 1734 for a workhouse, but refused



to allocate any funds at all for a public jail. Until the Circuit Court Act of 1769, the provost marshall had to hire a few small rooms to house his prisoners, and as a result few lawbreakers ever came to trial. Public order undoubtedly concerned residents of the Southern seaport where disbanded soldiers, sailors, and luckless settlers from the Backcountry created a very fluid and heterogeneous society, but fear of the poor did not shape public policy in the same way as the haunting dread of slave rebellion. The disorderly elements of society were distinct from paupers in the public mind. Institutionalization was a method of coping with the large number of indigents, not punishment for being poor. When a destitute band of Swiss emigrants roamed the streets of the port city, reports made to the Council were not of fear, but complaints that the door-to-door begging was a "perfect nuisance" to the citizens. One exception to this was in the case of the Acadians in 1755 and 1756. Because they were Catholics who refused to pledge allegiance to the British crown and also actually were prisoners of war, great and elaborate plans were made to imprison them in the workhouse under armed guard to prevent their escape and any possible plotting with slaves to cause an uprising. Despite their pitiful condition when they finally arrived in Charleston, and the fact their numbers dwindled over time so that most of the surviving Acadians were women and children, St. Phillip's vestry declined to assist them from public funds and the expense of their maintenance fell upon sympathetic and benevolent townspeople and the colonial Assembly.<sup>12</sup>

Even by contemporary standards, life in the almshouse was unpleasant, but the vestry sought to make it as tolerable as economically as possible. They advertised in the Gazette for a "Sober, Humane and Careful Person" to serve as warden, and provide both summer and winter clothing, blankets and bedding, and sugar and rum for the sick. A Charleston butcher was contracted to supply "Good and Wholesome Beef." Over the years the tiny workhouse became overcrowded and was also pressed into service to house unsavory criminals and runaway slaves. Conditions became so bad that the Assembly investigated and concluded that "the poor people have contracted of the bad acconomy and ill treatment....to such a degree that they chuse rather to beg about the streets than take relief there." Henry Laurens, who occasionally sent his slaves to the workhouse to be whipped, led a successful effort in 1766 to build a larger institution strictly for the paupers. He remarked upon the inhumanity of mix-



ing the "poor and sick who may be and often are pious and well disposed persons in a place where there is a daily correcting of slaves, a Continual Noise and disturbance, Cursing and Swearing from the Seamen." At this time there were one hundred twenty-nine people in the workhouse, and the parish also supported sixty-seven out-pensioners.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to economy and convenience, collecting the poor in a workhouse or screening them before dispensing any money gave the vestry an opportunity to enquire into the moral state of each applicant and hopefully further the cause of public virtue by making relief contingent upon good behavior and abstinence. Rum sellers and swearers were barred from the workhouse. The parish accepted bastard children, but usually attempted to seek out the father to charge him for the child's upkeep.<sup>14</sup>

The role of the gentry as moral arbiters stemmed from their perceptions of themselves as stewards of wealth, as well as their duty to the colony as public men. South Carolina was almost alone in its easy acceptance of the tremendous wealth it enjoyed by the 1760's and did not share the concern with other colonies that luxury and wealth might have a debilitating effect on the moral fibre of the people. Likewise, this abundance influenced popular attitudes towards the poor whose existence was seen as part of the human condition rather than an indictment of society. Charlestonians did not undergo the same intense self examination as their New England counterparts. Spared from the doubts arising from the Puritan intellectual heritage that suggested by helping the poor they might somehow interfere with God's grand design in which "some must be rich and some must be poor," the Charleston elite assumed that their great wealth required them to be patrons of the poor and share with them some of the blessings of Carolina. One of the few cases of criticism of the society came after the Great Fire of 1740 in a sermon preached by a New Englander, "The Burning of Sodom with its Moral Causes." The day after the fire, however, the vestry did not spend time counting their sins but sat ready to "interrogate" petitioners who suffered losses in the fire.<sup>15</sup>

The Anglican Church advocated benevolence as one of the demands on the responsible public man. Rather than worry about the possible sinfulness of wealth and luxury, the virtuous man should openly provide for the poor. The long time rector of St. Phillip's, Commissary Alexander Garden, who had been publically denounced by George Whitefield for the conspicuous consumption and licentious living going on in his



parish, deluged his congregation as well as the newspaper with attacks on Methodist enthusiasm, especially the doctrine of regeneration. He warned his congregation time after time that heaven could not be gained by cataclysmic rebirth, but only by Christian acts. According to Garden, one of the necessary good works demanded of all proper Christians was the giving of "Alms, both in public and private." A Presbyterian minister delivered a sermon in Charleston and spoke of the three duties of "Christian virtue" -- piety, justice, and charity. He reminded his congregation that they would receive "a full reward for every act of charity and beneficence in the very act itself and from the Reflections...made upon it."<sup>16</sup>

The concept of the stewardship of wealth and paternalistic attitude toward the poor was disseminated in a popular tract by Richard Allestree found in the libraries of many South Carolinians. In the Whole Duty of Man, Allestree also encouraged the doctrine of public benevolence and reminded his readers that "Heaven is too high to be...Jump into," but is rather a long process of good works. He compared charity to a kind of rent charge" exacted by God upon those who enjoy his material blessings. In turn, God named the poor of this world as his "Proxy and Receivers." Through charity, therefore, not only is God and neighbor served, but the giver is also promised by the scriptures an "eternal reward...for this performance."<sup>17</sup>

Benevolence toward the poor was by no means limited to Anglicans, nor did the public poor relief eliminate the need for private charities. Dissenters and ethnic groups formed mutual protection societies, for despite an ever increasing parish budget, the demand for help continued to exceed the available funds. Private charities were organized very early in Charleston and were a bridge between public relief and the casual handout to a beggar on the street. There is no evidence that the vestry discriminated against poor dissenters or foreigners, but the names of recipients are overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon and when foreigners were given relief their nationality was usually noted. Language was probably a difficulty and it is likely that indigent Germans felt less intimidated appearing before the German Friendly Society than having to plead their case before the local gentry of the St. Phillip's vestry.

Benevolent groups played an important role by helping to assimilate newcomers into the cosmopolitan society. Gradually they also became social clubs welcoming all



interested Charlestonians. Members of the St. Phillip's vestry frequently belonged to at least one of these groups. Involvement in these charitable societies suggests that their members felt a personal obligation to the poor beyond their requisite donation of the poor tax. "Leviathan" had not as had been feared "replaced the Good Samaritan."<sup>18</sup> The Scots of the Saint Andrews Society pledged themselves to "alleviate the cares of Life; to endear men one to another, and prevent or remedy those evils which are incident to our condition." A group of French Huguenots also began meeting regularly in a Tradd Street tavern to trade news and keep in touch. From time to time a collection would be taken up to help recent widows and orphans of their friends. This loose association evolved into the Two Bit Club and later assumed the more formal title of the South Carolina Society adopting as its motto "Charity and Brotherly Love." Many wealthy merchants and vestrymen bequeathed large sums of money to this society for benevolent purposes.<sup>19</sup>

One charitable organization, the Society for the Relief of the Widows and Orphans of Anglican Clergymen resisted being controlled by the city's elite. The group of clergy solicited no help from the lay population to protect the little autonomy they enjoyed. However, in 1771, when the coffers were nearly empty they turned to the successful men experienced in public service such as Benjamin Dart and Henry Middleton. After the relief society became a project of the gentry, it prospered. At one church service alone when a charity sermon was preached, £1500 was raised for the widows and orphans. The problem which the clergy had feared was realized because the amount of assistance a widow could hope for depended upon her husband's popularity with the parishioners.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1760's the dramatic increase in the poor moved a group of artisans to organize the Fellowship Society. By this time many local craftsmen had acquired a great deal of wealth and were aspiring to join the ranks of the gentry. They opened their own shops and bought large tracts of land outside of town taking on the trappings of the planter. The prosperous carpenter Daniel Cannon, who eventually owned a plantation, and a few other artisans served on the parish vestry, but most of the small urban middle class who participated in local government held positions that did not involve the dispersals of public monies but with the regulation of scarce resources such as coal and wood. The artisans professed to be guided not by religious motivations, but by that "distinguishing faculty, Reason" and responded to the needs of the poor



with much the same attitude as the gentry. According to the rules of Fellowship Society, the artisans had also come to feel that they too were bound to the poor "by the strictest ties of social duty." The founders of the Fellowship Society, many of whom later joined the Sons of Liberty, expressed dissatisfaction with the vestry's failure to effectively provide the indigent with "Lodging, Diet, and Medicine: and while their attempt to establish a hospital to separate the sick poor from the criminal ultimately failed, their agitation for some sort of reform probably influenced the Assembly to build the new Workhouse in 1768.<sup>21</sup>

In both its public and private forms, aid to the poor provided only stopgap measures and did little to eliminate the rampant poverty which forced the parish to continually borrow from the Assembly to meet its obligations. The lack of vagrancy laws and easy freedom of movement within the colony combined with the steady influx of injured soldiers and seamen to present the city with a continual drain on the poor fund. The parish and benevolent societies tried to avoid the expense of paupers who were not members of the community, but they usually provided the transients with some funds to help them get home or at least out of the city. Strangers were not warned out as in New England or branded with "P" as in some parts of New York.<sup>22</sup> The gentry of Charleston met the challenges accompanying the rise of the city to a position of prominence among the ports of colonial America not from fear of the unruly crowd, but with a genuine spirit of benevolence and humanitarianism as they strove to fulfill what they perceived to be their role as public men of virtue.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Cooper and D.J. McCord, eds., Statutes-at-Large of South Carolina, II (Columbia, S.C., 1836-1841), 116, 135.

<sup>2</sup>William Simpson, The Practical Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer, of his Majesty's Province of South Carolina (Charleston, 1761), 204-206; St. Phillip's Protestant Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Vestry (1732-1776). Hereafter cited V.M. Although in 1755 Charleston was divided into two districts with the creation of St. Michael's Parish, the vestry of St. Phillip's continued to collect and disburse the town's poor tax.



<sup>3</sup>Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives, II, (Columbia, S. C., 1977), 642, 607, 627, 430.

<sup>4</sup>Walter B. Edgar, Letterbook of Robert Pringle, I (Columbia, S.C., 1972), I, 211; Pauline Maier, "Popular Up-risings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth Century America," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, XXVII (1970), 7.

<sup>5</sup>Jack P. Greene, "Search for Identity: An Interpretation of the Meaning of Selected Patterns of Social Response in 18th Century America," Journal of Social History (1970), 206; Bartholomew R. Carroll, ed., Historical Collections of South Carolina (New York, 1836), II, 490; South Carolina Gazette, 12 January 1765.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 2 February 1765, 31 October 1774.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Maxwell Brown, The South Carolina Regulators (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 51; Robert M. Weir, "The Harmony We Were Famous For: An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, XXVI (1969), 479; Henry Laurens to James Grant, 23 March 1767, The Papers of Henry Laurens, edited by George C. Rogers and David R. Chesnutt, V, 238.

<sup>8</sup>V.M., 18 November 1745.

<sup>9</sup>Jean Louis Gutton, La Societe et les pauvres: L'Exemple de la generalities de Lyon, 1534-1789, 53, as quoted in Cissie C. Fairchild, Poverty and Charity in Aix-en-Provence, 1640 - 1789 (Baltimore, 1976), 73.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 73-74; V.M. 12 February 1751, 4 March 1773; South Carolina Gazette, 2 February 1765.

<sup>11</sup>V.M., 18 November 1734; David Bertleson, The Lazy South (New York, 1967), 105-106; V.M., 22 April 1761, 29 October 1757, 20 December 1742.

<sup>12</sup>Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742 (New York, 1960), 385; Gilbert Voight, "Swiss Notes on South Carolina," South Carolina Historical and Geneological Magazine, XXX (July 1920), 98-99; Ruth Allison Hudnut and Hayes Baker Crothers, "Acadians in South Carolina," American Historical Review, XLIII (April 1938), 500, 503, 506, 510, 504.



<sup>13</sup>V.M., 17 October 1743, 30 July 1739, 13 July 1761, 12 February 1751, 15 December 1766; South Carolina Gazette, 26 November 1753; J.H. Easterby, "Public Poor Relief in Colonial Charleston, A Report to the Commons House of Assembly about the year 1767," South Carolina Historical and Geneological Magazine, XLII (July 1941), 85. An interesting comparison can be made with Boston. In the same year, the Boston Poorhouse had 29 inmates. Robert E. Brown, Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691-1780 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1955), 17.

<sup>14</sup>V.M., February 1766, 21 July 1773.

<sup>15</sup>Jack P. Greene, "Search for Identity," 200; John Winthrop, as quoted in Christine Leigh Heyrman, " 'A Model of Christian Charity': The Rich and the Poor in New England, 1630-1730" (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1978), 251; Josiah Smith, "The Burning of Sodom with its Moral Causes, Improved in a Sermon in Charleston, November 1740;" South Carolina Gazette, 11 November 1740.

<sup>16</sup>Alexander Garden, "Regeneration and the Testimony of the Spirit" (Cornhill, 1741), 2; Josiah Smith, Sermons on Several Important Subjects (Boston, 1757), 5.

<sup>17</sup>Richard Allestree, The Whole Duty of Man (London, 1716), 138, 373-74.

<sup>18</sup>Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (New York, 1964), 270.

<sup>19</sup>J.H. Easterby, The History of the St. Andrews Society (Charleston, S.C., 1929), 20; South Carolina Society, Transactions Upon the Occasion of the Centennial Celebration (Charleston, S.C., 1905), 4-5; Wills of Charleston County, Vol. 19, Book B, 496; Edgar and Bailey, Biographical Directory, I, 428, 517.

<sup>20</sup>Frederick Dalcho, An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina (Charleston, S.C., 1820), 190-91, 198.

<sup>21</sup>Rules of the Fellowship Society as quoted in Robert Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Liberty: A Study of the Artisans, 1763-1789 (Columbia, S.C., 1959), 28, 30.

<sup>22</sup>David M Schneider, The History of Public Welfare in New York State, 1609-1866 (Chicago, 1938), 64.



## CONTROLLING THE POOR IN COLONIAL CHARLES TOWN

Walter J. Fraser, Jr.

During the several decades before the American Revolution a small merchant-professional elite, grown wealthy in trade, land, and slaves and connected by marriage and united in their values, dominated the political, economic and social life of Charles Town.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary travelers to the fourth largest city in Great Britain's North American colonies were awed by the visible manifestations of the elite's wealth. They saw "handsome equipages" rolling through the city's streets which stopped before "large, handsome...Brick Houses" containing "elegant pictures...grand and costly looking glasses." Mingling with the elite in their homes and clubs, at their balls and concerts, visitors described them as "showy and expensive in their dress and way of living;" found magnificence and ostentation...conspicuous;" and generally enjoyed the "elegant and gay society" of the "refined metropolis."<sup>2</sup> Intrigued by life at the "top" among the few, the travelers neglected to comment on life at the "bottom" for the many. Only rarely did they mention what must have been the quite visible signs of sharp class divisions within the community. A Massachusetts native who visited Charles Town in 1773 wrote: "The inhabitants may well be divided into the opulent and Lordly..., poor and spiritless peasants and vile slaves."<sup>3</sup> Nor did visitors then or have historians since<sup>4</sup> commented on the attitudes of the elite toward the growing number of poor whites although it was a phenomenon which gravely concerned the well-to-do in the colonial South's urban center.

Recently historians of the three other most populous pre-Revolutionary urban centers, Boston, New York and Philadelphia, have shown that while a tiny elite in each city grew wealthier, the number of the poor increased dramatically. And it has been suggested that this phenomenon should be considered in accounting for the coming of the American Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

This paper will show that the number of poor whites in pre-Revolutionary Charles Town, like those in the northern urban centers, rose sharply; that the city's tiny elite became alarmed over the steadily increasing number of indigents and the steeply rising property taxes levied to maintain them; and that there was a growing fear among the elite that "disorderly" poor whites might join with the large servile black



population, unique to the South's urban center, and threaten both their lives and their property. Thus while threatened by Great Britain's "new" colonial policies, the elite felt threatened by internal "disorder." Consequently, they sought to control or manipulate the poor by a variety of methods.

Between 1750 and the early 1770's the population of Charles Town doubled, rising from approximately 6,000 to 12,000 persons equally divided between black slaves and whites.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the period the number of poor whites, the ill, indigent, temporarily or chronically unemployed and vagrant increased dramatically. Requests for relief by individuals and heads of households from the vestrymen and churchwardens tripled. These churchmen, representing the city's merchant and professional elite, were charged by law to levy and collect the poor taxes and to administer relief. As the numbers of requests for relief increased, the churchmen complained that their duties were becoming more arduous and time-consuming. In 1751 there were approximately twenty-nine applications for welfare; in 1765, sixty-nine; and in 1772, eighty-seven.<sup>7</sup> To meet the rising number of requests from the needy, the churchmen frequently had to levy higher rates on the property holders of the city, and taxes soared almost seven hundred percent over a period of twenty-one years. In the 1751-1752 tax year the churchmen authorized a levy of 1500 pounds on the property of the well-to-do inhabitants for the relief of the poor; for 1757-1758, 5500 pounds; in 1767, 6500 pounds. By 1772 the churchmen voted to collect 9000 pounds and in 1773, 10,400 pounds. In addition to these funds, the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly from time to time turned over to the churchmen funds from the general taxes raised across the province. This money was to be used only for the relief of the "Invalid Soldiers, Soldiers' Wives and Orphans and the Transient Poor." In the year 1767 alone the churchwardens received over 4400 pounds for this purpose.<sup>8</sup>

By the early 1750's the number of poor had grown to the extent that the "Hospital, Work-House and House of Correction" built on Myzack Street in the 1730's for the incarceration of "paupers, vagrants, common beggars" and other "lewd, idle and disorderly persons" was filled to capacity. Conditions there had deteriorated so that the churchwardens of St. Philip's were informed that the poor preferred to beg in the streets rather than enter the Work-House. Following an investigation,



the churchmen appealed to the Commons House of Assembly for funds to enlarge the structure. Although the Assembly appropriated less than one-half the funds requested, the Work-House and Hospital was enlarged. But by 1757 it again was crowded to capacity. Once more the churchmen appealed to the legislature for funds to assist the poor as they seemed to be "daily increasing." Soaring welfare costs were due to the numbers and needs of the "wives, widows and orphans of soldiers' and "invalids" discharged by provincial units, British army forces, and "sick and infirm" Acadians.<sup>9</sup> Over one thousand destitute French Canadian colonists, exiles by the British government from Nova Scotia, had been transported to Charles Town during the winter, 1755-1756. Many of these displaced persons had been distributed throughout the countryside, but numbers of the "naked and forlorn" Acadians remained in the city.<sup>10</sup> The Assembly responded by immediately appropriating 300 pounds and promised additional funds in the future for poor relief.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 1760's an investigation by a grand jury found the Work-House and Hospital again jammed with "criminals, vagrants, sailors, and Negroes." Grand juries which were annually appointed to investigate any matters touching on life in the city were composed of Charles Town's elite. Frequently they were the same individuals who served as the vestrymen and churchwardens of St. Philip's. Because accommodations at the Work-House were so "insufficient," the grand jurors complained to the legislature that "notorious bawdes, strumpets, vagrants, drunkards, and idle persons who might be there committed, reign and infest the...town." In 1766 an inquiry by the churchwardens of St. Philip's confirmed the report of the grand jurors. Due to the "great numbers" of "seamen and slaves" confined at the Work-House and Hospital, the churchmen averred, "it is impossible that the poor who are become very numerous can be accommodated there." And because the "Burthens of the poor on the inhabitants of Charles Town is now become intolerable," the churchmen petitioned the Royal Governor and Assembly to use the now occupied "New Barracks" as additional quarters for the indigent. Their request granted, the churchmen transferred sixty-nine men, women and children to the "New Barracks" by early 1767.<sup>12</sup> About fifty poor persons remained at the Work-House and Hospital while over eighty were maintained "on the Parish" in private homes within the city. Thirty-one poor boys and girls, ages twelve or below, were being maintained and educated at the Parish Free School. The churchwardens also



"daily relieved...divers transient poor."<sup>13</sup> Then in the late Spring, 1767, three hundred poor persons "landed out of a ship from Ireland." Temporarily lodged at the "Old Barracks," they soon became an additional burden for the churchwardens and citizens. Nearly "every one" of the Irish immigrants became "confined to their beds by a cruel Flux and Fever." Churchmen who visited them "found a dismal and melancholly Scene...Corpses... many dying...young children lying entirely naked...reduced by sickness...whose parents had expired."<sup>14</sup>

By late 1767 the number of poor whites maintained by the church, combined with unemployed vagrants, must have reached approximately twenty-five percent of the some 4,000 whites in the city or about one out of every four. The ratio of poor whites and black slaves to the remaining population was approximately five to three in the city of some 8,000 persons.

Obviously, it was this alarming increase in the number of poor within the city and the persistent complaints from the elite which prompted the Assembly to begin an inquiry "into the state of the Poor in Charles Town." After several months of investigation, the Assembly concluded that the ever-increasing number of poor in the city was attributable to the ease by which the indigent could settle in Charles Town and obtain welfare; that dying or transient soldiers had left behind many women and children; that recent British policies had caused "a stagnation of Trade and business" and left many jobless; and that "the superabundance of Licensed Taverns and Tippling Houses" which were frequented by the poor whites had brought "the Ruin of their health."<sup>15</sup>

Due to the results of their investigation and the persistent appeals of Charles Town's elite, the Assembly in early 1768 passed an "Act for appropriating the present Work House for a place of Correction...and for building a Poor House and Hospital and for establishing further Regulations respecting the Poor." A sum not to exceed ten thousand pounds was appropriated to build a new poor house and hospital near the present one which hereafter would be used only as a place of confinement and correction for fugitive slaves, seamen, "vagrants and disorderly persons." In an attempt to reduce the financial drain on the elite of the province and city, the Assembly increased the residency requirements in Charles Town from three to twelve months for anyone seeking welfare from the churchwardens at St. Philip's.<sup>16</sup>



But Charles Town's elite continued to assert that these measures taken by a planter-dominated Assembly and the Royal Governor were "innefectual." Up to the eve of the Revolution, grand jury investigations urged additional legislation "to prevent the poor and Idle from all parts of this...many neighboring provinces...and other parts of the world" from coming to Charles Town. They urged the Assembly "to stop this growing Evil" and to put the poor-tax on an equal footing throughout the province. Members of the Charles Town elite who served in the Commons House, like Christopher Gadsden, laid before the government petitions from their angry and frustrated constituents which asked that the property of planters living beyond the city be assessed for "poor taxes" on the same basis as that of Charles Town's elite. But the planter-dominated Assembly and Royal Governor remained unresponsive to these requests. And the city's elite remained bitter over the growing tax burden which they bore for poor relief and alarmed over the growing numbers of the "disorderly" poor and idle in the city.<sup>17</sup> One of the elite's greatest fears was that the poor whites might encourage or join with their slaves in insurrection.

Long before the dramatic increase of poor whites in the city, Charlestonians had worried over the growing "black majority" there. Measures enacted from time to time to control the movement of the blacks within the city often had proved unsuccessful. Rumors, fancied or real, of thefts, arson, poisonings, conspiracies and revolts by slaves frequently swept the city. Alleged "plotters" were rounded up, speedily brought to trial, and executed.<sup>18</sup>

Fears among Charles Town's elite of a slave insurrection were intensified in the mid-1750's when war erupted between England and France. Having "dreadful apprehensions" of a French invasion,<sup>19</sup> one member of the city's elite worried that their slaves may be encouraged "to rise upon their masters and cut their throats in hopes of obtaining freedom."<sup>20</sup> Fears were aggravated further when some one thousand impoverished Acadians were brought into town at a time when the numbers of poor, idle, and white vagrants were rising. In 1756 the Royal Governor observed that the poor Acadians gave Charlestonians "the utmost uneasiness...as they may watch opportunity and join with the Negroes."<sup>21</sup> Four years later



the elite still were worried over the several hundred "discontented" Acadians who remained in the city. And following an alleged plot among plantation slaves to arm themselves and march on Charles Town,<sup>22</sup> members of the city's elite serving in the Commons House called for the expulsion of the few hundred remaining Acadians. They told the Assembly and Governor; "Our greatest apprehension of danger from [the Acadians] proceeds from that free intercourse which they have had and still...must have with our slaves whom they may stir up to insurrection and Rebellion." But the Royal Lieutenant Governor refused to act and the Acadians continued to reside in the city.<sup>23</sup>

During the Christmas season, 1765, rumors of a "plot" among "Negroes to make a general insurrection to Massacre... the White People" terrorized the town and guards were posted.<sup>24</sup> About the same time hundreds of idle, unemployed sailors became "disorderly." Confined in the port city because their ships were not allowed to sail with unstamped paper, the sailors grew "licentious," formed "a Mob" and threatened the townspeople. But they were dispersed quickly by the elite-led Sons of Liberty who "committed the Ring-Leaders to Gaol."<sup>25</sup> The prompt suppression of "disorderly" whites at a time when rumors of a slave revolt swirled about the city indicates the fear that haunted the elite over the possibility of a simultaneous uprising of slaves and poor whites.

Such fears continued until the end of the colonial period. In August, 1775, a free Negro, Thomas Jeremiah, commonly called Jerry in Charles Town, was accused of planning an insurrection. Arrested, tried and found guilty, he was promptly executed. During his trial and before his execution Jerry was questioned as to whether or not any white persons were involved. The Royal Governor noted that "not a shadow of evidence appeared that any white man was concerned."<sup>26</sup>

Not only did Charles Town's elite fear conspiracies between poor whites and black slaves which might threaten their lives, but they worried about threats to their property as thefts increased. And it was in the "great numbers" of "dram shops," "tippling or disorderly houses" of the city which sold "spirituous" liquors to sailors, idle and vagrant whites and to slaves illegally where the elite believed plots originated. Repeatedly, the elite who composed the



grand juries protested to the Assembly that the "tippling houses" were the "source from which many of the Evils... daily Committed derive." Here fraternizing with the slaves, poor whites were "corrupting and seducing...Negroes to rob and steal and to commit "other disorders." Here also whites were "detected...buying and receiving...stolen goods."<sup>27</sup>

Nor could the elite depend on the town watch to control the growing "vice and Immorality" spawned by the "tippling houses." Some watchmen or their wives operated "dram shops" and encouraged "Negroes and others to frequent their houses." Thus they abetted the "evils which their duty should lead them to prevent" and even protected "disorderly persons in their mal-practices." To prevent these "evils" the elite petitioned the Assembly to prohibit the practice of granting watchmen or their families licenses to sell "spirituous liquors."<sup>28</sup>

Grand jurors frequently cited individuals for keeping "disorderly houses" and asked the legislature to shut them down. But when the legislators did so, the owners sometimes were soon back in business at other locations. In 1765 Joseph Turpin was cited for "keeping a disorderly gaming house to the great prejudice of the youth of the town;" and a few years later Daniel Cane was cited "for keeping a disorderly, tippling, and gaming house where apprentices and other youth are entertained and debauched." Alarmed over the growing immorality in the town, the grand jurors asked the Assembly to close down houses of prostitution. Both Mary McDowell and Mary Grant were cited for keeping "a most notorious brothel for lewd women" and for "harboring loose and Idle women." Mary Grant was closed down but only temporarily. She soon reopened her business elsewhere in the city.<sup>29</sup>

Until the end of the colonial period the elite were unsuccessful in limiting the number of "dram houses" or "disorderly houses" which they believed contributed to the ruin of the health and morals of the poor and which served as the gathering places for black and white conspirators. These establishments continued to increase. In 1763 there were sixty-six "houses" selling "spirituous liquors;" in 1769, one hundred and six; and in 1773, one hundred fifteen.<sup>30</sup>



As the numbers "of idle, loose and disorderly persons" increased, it alarmed the elite that these poor freely roamed the streets "profanely cursing, swearing and talking obscenely ....insult[ing] the inhabitants of the Town." And as robberies increased, the well-to-do lost confidence in the town watch to maintain order.<sup>31</sup> By the late 1760's the elite regarded the watch as "insufficient...to guard the town." They recommended to the legislature that the "number and pay" of the town watch "be increased whereby men of some repute and property may be induced to serve." But the legislature took no action. By the end of the colonial period the elite had no confidence whatsoever in the watch being able to "preserve...the Property of the people and Town from harm."<sup>32</sup>

Criticism of the town watch peaked at the same time that the numbers of poor and vagrant whites reached their highest levels and a "crime wave" swept the city. Thieves broke into the homes of such elite members of the community as Miles Brewton and Roger Pinckney. They took silver spoons and bowls, clothes and watches. Following a rash of break-ins, Peter Timothy, the editor of the Gazette, warned his readers "to be particularly on...guard against thefts at this time."<sup>33</sup>

The editor and grand jurors urged the Assembly to appropriate funds to erect "public lamps" in the city as a method of helping to prevent the increasing numbers of robberies; to provide "public stocks" and a "public gaol" in which to punish and confine the growing numbers of "criminals." The Assembly did appropriate a limited amount of money for pillories, a gaol, and lamps. Apparently, however, some of the lamps were "wantonly" and "maliciously" smashed soon after they were erected.<sup>34</sup>

In the midst of the "crime wave" the Assembly did respond to the elite's pleas for an act to supplement the watch act to "preserve good order...in Charles Town." The act, passed in mid-1769, was necessary the assembly noted, because "the crimes of burglary and breaking open houses... are of late years become more frequent than formerly, to the great disquiet, terror and impoverishing of His Majesty's subjects." The measure promised a reward for any citizen who apprehended "any white person or persons" who break and



enter a dwelling. Persons convicted of knowingly buying or receiving stolen goods or concealing a burglar would upon conviction "suffer...the pains of death."<sup>35</sup>

In hopes of deterring assaults and thefts by the "disorderly" whites, the Court of General Sessions sitting at Charles Town handed down harsh punishments which were carried out publicly. Public earcroppings, brandings, whippings and hangings increased sharply.<sup>36</sup> Some of the harshest punishments were meted out to white felons who conspired with blacks. For example, during the Spring, 1770, three white men and four slaves seized a schooner near Charles Town and sailed south. Immediately the Assembly offered a handsome 100 pounds sterling reward for their capture. Early the following year they were apprehended in the Caribbean and returned to the city for trial. Each of the three white men were sentenced to be hanged. The fate of the blacks is unknown.<sup>37</sup>

In 1773 the court at Charles Town sentenced "a Negro" to be hanged for robbing William Somerall of "a considerable sum of money." During the trial and until "his last moments," the "Negro" accused Jacob Ramos, a white man, "of having excited him to commit...the Robbery" and to whom he had given the money. Apparently, the court in a highly unusual move accepted the testimony of "the Negro" and solely on his word handed down a harsh sentence for Ramos. He was fined 350 pounds, given thirty-nine lashes, and sentenced to stand in the public pillory. While confined there, the editor of the Gazette noted, Ramos "was severely and incessantly pelted by an enraged populace."<sup>38</sup>

But despite the measures pressed on the government by Charles Town's elite to control the "disorderly" poor and white thieves and the actions taken, crime and disorder continued to plague the city. Again and again, until the Revolution, the elite petitioned the South Carolina government to incorporate the city. If this were done, the elite believed, "the internal police of [Charles Town] may be more easily regulated and better managed."<sup>39</sup>

While the grand jurors sought the government's assistance, often unsuccessfully, to physically control the "disorderly" poor, the churchwardens and vestrymen of St. Philip's



Church used somewhat different methods. Like the grand jurors, the churchmen did pursue a policy of institutionalizing the poor, but they attempted also to manipulate the poor with money. In this way they hoped to reduce "vice and immorality" and to reform the poor both young and old. Acting on hundreds of requests for welfare, the churchmen were quick to grant money to those who met their own moral code or set of values and to deny or withhold funds from those who did not. Sharing the grand jurors' "utmost uneasiness" over the growing needs and numbers of the poor, the churchmen attempted to manipulate their behavior for both social and economic reasons.

To reduce the financial burden on the tax payers of the city as well as the numbers of the poor, the churchmen offered inducements of money and goods to those indigents who were willing to leave the city. Mrs. Shaw and her family were promised a sum not exceeding ten pounds "upon their moving out of town." George Audey was informed that he would receive one blanket and five pounds "provided he and his family do goe into the country."<sup>40</sup>

The churchmen made it their business to know about the background and character of persons seeking welfare. Those known to be "industrious," "pious," or "deserving poor," and were long-time residents of the city usually received assistance.<sup>41</sup> When applicants of questionable morals sought assistance the churchmen nevertheless sometimes granted money in hopes of using it to reform them. For instance, when Frances James applied for relief she was "promised 30 pence per month," but only as long as "she remains sober."<sup>42</sup>

Those persons granted relief but whose subsequent behavior did not live up to the churchmen's own set of values or moral code were dealt with harshly. After the churchmen were informed that Joanna Kelly and Hester Tomson had "behaved very disorderly in the workhouse," they ordered the women to be "sent into the country." If ever they returned to the city, the warden of the workhouse was instructed to apprehend them and "to keep them in close confinement" until they could again be "sent away." These single women may have been engaged in prostitution as was perhaps a Mrs. Evans. The churchwardens decided that she would no longer be maintained at the workhouse because of "her misbehavior." On one occasion, after the churchwardens were informed that



some of the poor at the "New Barracks" were "living disorderly," the churchmen accompanied by constables conducted an on site investigation. Following an examination of "everyone there," about seventy persons, the churchmen ordered out thirteen men, women and children for "selling rum and disorderly living." If any were found "refractory," the constables were directed to physically remove them. Soon a new warden was appointed who apparently did his job quite well. The churchmen praised his abilities before the legislators who then rewarded the warden with certain prerequisites for being "of great service in keeping good order among the numerous poor" at the "New Barracks."<sup>43</sup>

The dilemma of a Mrs. Southy particularly outraged the churchmen and violated their moral code. Separated from her husband, she had been maintained "many years" at Parish expense. Then the churchmen learned that she had secretly "Married...a youth, an apprentice," and now was "big with child." Immediately discontinuing her allowance, they ordered her "confined to the workhouse."<sup>44</sup>

The rising numbers of desertion and bastardy cases among the poor alarmed the churchmen for both moral and financial reasons. For both reasons they acted quickly to insure that fathers supported their offspring. Informed that Henry Beckman "had turn'd his wife out of Doors with a Young Infant at her Breast," the churchwardens ordered Beckman to "allow his wife and child a maintenance of Eight pounds per month." When Ann Caesar and Lucy Boone sought maintenance for their "bastard" children, the churchwardens granted them relief, but launched investigations to determine the paternity of the infants.<sup>45</sup>

The churchmen of St. Philip's attempted also to control the lives of the rising numbers of illegitimate children and orphans. The elite wished to do so for similar social and economic reasons that they had for controlling the indigent adults of the city. The churchwardens placed these children in foster homes or institutions. They provided for their sustenance, lodging, clothing, education and religious instruction and carefully monitored their progress and behavior. Some children were bound out as apprentices for reasons of economy, but the churchwardens continued to oversee their wards' living and working environment. The elite, then,



hoped to insure that these young wards of the church and taxpayers of Charles Town became healthy, literate, law-abiding, productive adults who would support and share their own moral code and set of values.<sup>46</sup>

In sum, the merchant and professional elite of pre-Revolutionary Charles Town believed that the rapidly growing numbers of poor whites within the city posed a real threat to both their lives and property. Therefore, they attempted to control the poor by institutionalizing them, with the town watch, by harsh punishments, and with money. But unable to get the complete support of a planter-dominated Assembly and royal officials, the city elite were frustrated in their efforts. Thus haunted by fears of threats from below by indigent whites and black slaves and from above by Great Britain, Charles Town's elite by 1775 were moving toward a revolution in their own interests.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert M. Weir, "'Liberty and Property, and No Stamps': South Carolina and the Stamp Act Crisis" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1966), 32-38, 43-58; David Morton Knepper, "The Political Structure of Colonial South Carolina, 1743-1776" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1971), 15-18, 25-28; Richard Waterhouse, "The Responsible Gentry of Colonial South Carolina; A Study in Local Government, 1670-1770" in Bruce C. Daniels (ed.), Town and Country: Essays on the Structure of Local Government in the American Colonies (Middletown, Conn., 1978), 174-181.

<sup>2</sup>Visitors to the city 1750's-1770's included J.F.D. Smyth, "the English Traveler," Adam Gordon, William Dillwyn, and William Gerard De Brahn as quoted in Frank Winkler Ryan, Jr., "Travelers in South Carolina in the Eighteenth Century" in Yearbook: City of Charleston (Charleston, 1948), 210-212, 219-220; Mark A. DeWolfe Howe (ed.), "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1773," Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, XLIX (October, 1915 - June, 1916), 454-455.

<sup>3</sup>Howe, "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Junior," 454.



<sup>4</sup>See for example Carl Bridenbaugh, Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South (Baton Rouge, 1952); Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America: 1743-1776 (New York, 1955); George C. Rogers, Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys (Norman, 1969).

<sup>5</sup>James A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," William and Mary Quarterly, XXII (January, 1965), 75-92; Raymond A. Mohl, "Poverty in Early America, A Reappraisal: The Case of Eighteenth Century New York City," New York History, L(1969), 5-27; Allan Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," William and Mary Quarterly, XXVIII (January, 1971), 376-411; Gary B. Nash, "Poverty and Poor Relief in Pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia," William and Mary Quarterly, XXXIII (January, 1976), 3-29; Gary B. Nash, "Urban Wealth and Poverty in Pre-Revolutionary America," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, VI (Spring, 1976), 545-584; Gary B. Nash, "Social Change and the Growth of Pre-Revolutionary Urban Radicalism," in Alfred F. Young (ed.), The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism (DeKalb, Ill., 1976), 3-36.

<sup>6</sup>Weir, "'Liberty and Property'", 36, n6, 38, n9; Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, 5, 333-334.

<sup>7</sup>South Carolina Parish of St. Philip's Vestry Book I, 1732-1775 (ms., St. Philip's Church, Charleston, S.C.); South Carolina Parish of St. Philip's Vestry Book II, 1756-1774 (ms., St. Philip's Church, Charleston, S.C.); Richard Waterhouse, "South Carolina's Colonial Elite: A Study in the Social Structure and Political Culture of a Southern Colony, 1670-1760" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1973), 239-240. The vestrymen and churchwardens of St. Philip's were among the wealthiest and most "prestigious figures" in the colony. Most were merchants and their extant inventories reveal that the mean value of their estates was 8,934 pounds and that they owned on the average eighty-seven slaves.

<sup>8</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book I, March 18, 1751; St. Philip's Vestry Book II, January 7, 1757, January 12, March 13, 1758, June 19, 1766, February 25, 1771, April 27, August 10, 1-72; "Journal of the Commons House of South



Carolina, October 28, 1765 - May 28, 1767" (ms., South Carolina Archives, Columbia, S.C.), "Schedule of the Charges to the Government, January 1 - December 31, 1767," April 6, 1767, XXXVII, 343, 666.

<sup>9</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book I, February 12, March 18, April 22, June 3, August 26, 1751; June 23, 1752; May 13, 21, July 19, August 12, October 16, 22, November 20, 1754; January 22, 1755; St. Philip's Vestry Book II, June 20, October 3, 10, 1757; South Carolina Gazette, July 17, 1755; "Journal of the Commons House of South Carolina, November 12, 1754 - March 10, 1755" (ms., South Carolina Archives, Columbia, S.C.), January 28, May 9, 1755, XXX, 150, 536; Benjamin J. Klebaner, "Public Poor Relief in Charleston, 1800-1860," South Carolina Historical Magazine, LX (October, 1954), 210.

<sup>10</sup>Marguerite B. Hamer, "The Fate of the Exiled Acadians in South Carolina," Journal of Southern History, IV (May, 1938), 199-204; South Carolina Gazette, July 29, 1756.

<sup>11</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book II, December 3, 13, 1757; "Journal of the Commons House, October 6, 1757 - April 7, 1759" (ms., South Carolina Archives, Columbia, S.C.), December 2, 1757, XXXII, 44-49.

<sup>12</sup>South Carolina Gazette, November 5, 1764, June 1, 1765, "Presentments of the Grand Jury;" St. Philip's Vestry Book II, December 7, 22, 1766. Approximately twenty-five percent of some two-hundred and seventy persons who served as grand jurors from 1756 to 1774 were members of the "great families" of South Carolina. Included among these were Benjamin Smith, planter-merchant, and the richest man to die in South Carolina before the Revolution; Gabriel Manigault, the wealthiest person in Charles Town by 1776; prominent export-import merchants, large slaveholders and landowners Thomas L. Smith, John Savage, George Inglis, and members of the Commons House of Assembly, Christopher Gadsden, Jacob Mott, Jr., Hopkin Price and Richard Beresford. See Grand Jury Lists, South Carolina Gazette, May 1, 1756; November 5, 1764; June 1, 1765; June 2, 1766; January 25, 1768; May 3, 1770; February 7, 1771; April 18, 1771; November 7, 1771; January 24, October 29, 1772; February 22, May 24, October 23, 1773; February 28, June 6, 1774; See also Weir, "'Liberty and Property' and No Stamps", 454,



457, 472-481 for "Appendix D," list of the "Great Families;" W. Robert Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Slave Trade, 1735-1775," South Carolina Historical Magazine, LXV (October, 1964), 207-208, 210-211; Waterhouse, "South Carolina's Colonial Elite," 161-162; W. O. Moore, Jr., "The Largest Exporters of Deerskins From Charles Town, 1735-1775," South Carolina Historical Magazine, 74 (July, 1973), 148.

<sup>13</sup>"Journal of the Commons House," April 6, 1767, XXXVII, 343-344; J. H. Easterby (ed.), "Public Poor Relief in Colonial Charles Town: A Report of the Commons House of Assembly About the Year 1767," South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, XLII (April, 1941), 83-86.

<sup>14</sup>South Carolina Gazette, June 29, 1767, "Presentments of the Grand Jury," November 9, 1767.

<sup>15</sup>Easterby, "Public Poor Relief," 83-86; "Journal of the Commons House," April 6, 1767, XXXVII, 343-344.

<sup>16</sup>David J. McCord (ed.), The Statutes at Large of South Carolina (Columbia, 1840), VII, 90-92; Joseph I. Waring, "The Marine Hospitals of Charleston (Charleston, 1939), 172, n3, 173; South Carolina Gazette, January 25, 1768, "Presentments of the Grand Jury."

<sup>17</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book II, May 24, 1770; South Carolina Gazette January 25, 1770, February 7, 1771, February 23, 1773; "Journal of the Commons House, November 28, 1769 - September 18, 1770" (ms. South Carolina Archives, Columbia, S.C.), February 22, 1770, XXXVIII, 277-280, 325-326.

<sup>18</sup>Peter H. Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (New York, 1974), 166, 213-217, 221, 223, 241, 272-275, 283-284, 297-300; John Donald Duncan, "Servitude and Slavery in Colonial South Carolina, 1670-1776" (2 vols., unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1972), I, 105 268-269, II, 494-496, 562-568, 583-584, 690-691, 776-777, 806-812; Daniel E. Meaders, "South Carolina Fugitives As Viewed Through Local Colonial Newspapers with Emphasis on Runaway Notices, 1732-1801," Journal of Negro History, LX (April, 1975), 298-299



310-311; James Glen to My Lords, May 28, 1745, April 28, 1747, Records in the British Public Records Office (21 vols., microfilm), XXII, 104, 272-273.

<sup>19</sup>Journal of the Commons House," June 27, 1757, XXI, 142-143; Henry Laurens to Thomas Frankland, February 11, 1757 and to Richard Oswald & Company, April 18, 1757 in Philip M. Hamer and George C. Rogers, Jr. (eds.), The Papers of Henry Laurens, November 1, 1755 - December 31, 1758 (Columbia, 1970), 449, n3, 522.

<sup>20</sup>Charles Pinckney to the Board of Trade, 1756, as quoted in Duncan, "Servitude and Slavery," II, 813.

<sup>21</sup>James Glen to the Board of Trade, April 11, 1756, as quoted in Knepper, "The Political Structure of Colonial South Carolina," 37.

<sup>22</sup>Duncan, "Servitude and Slavery," II, 817-819.

<sup>23</sup>"Journal of the Commons House, July 2, 1759 - June 6, 1760" (ms., South Carolina Archives, Columbia), July 12, 18, 1760, XXXIII, 325, 340-341, 371.

<sup>24</sup>Duncan, "Servitude and Slavery," 819-321.

<sup>25</sup>Pauline Maier, "The Charleston Mob and the Evolution of Popular Politics in Revolutionary South Carolina, 1765-1784," Perspectives in American History, IV (1970), 176-177.

<sup>26</sup>Quoted in David Merrill Zornow, "A Troublesome Community: Blacks in Revolutionary Charles Town, 1765-1775" (unpublished Senior Essay for the B.A. in Social Studies, Harvard College, 1976), 86.

<sup>27</sup>South Carolina Gazette, May 1, 1756, January 25, 1768; October 16, 1769; January 25, 1770; October 29, 1772; February 22, May 24, 1773; June 6, October 31, 1774, "Presentments of the Grand Jury."

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., November 2, 1767; May 9, 1768; October 29, 1772; May 24, June 6, 1774, "Presentments of the Grand Jury."

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., November 5, 1764, February 7, November 7, 1771.



- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., April 29, 1763; April 13, 1769; April 16, 19, 1773.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., April 22, 1769; January 25, 1770; April 18, 1771; February 22, 1773, "Presentments of the Grand Jury."
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., November 2, 1767; May 9, 1768; October 29, 1772; June 6, 1774, "Presentments of the Grand Jury."
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., June 1, 15, September 28, October 12, 1765; December 15, 1766; May 11, 1769.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., January 25, 1768; April 22, October 16, 1769; January 25, March 29, 1770; February 7, 1771; February 22, 1773; February 28, 1774, "Presentments of the Grand Jury."
- <sup>35</sup>The act as printed in the South Carolina Gazette, August 31, 1769.
- <sup>36</sup>"Journal of the Court of General Sessions, 1769-1776" (ms., South Carolina Archives, Columbia, S.C.); South Carolina Gazette, October 12, 26, 1769; January 1, April 19, May 3, 1770; January 31, 1771; March 26, September 10, December 24, 1772; March 1, 15, November 1, 1773; February 28, 1774.
- <sup>37</sup>South Carolina Gazette, May 3, 1770; January 31, 1771.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid., November 1, 1773.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., April 22, 1769; June 6, October 31, 1774.
- <sup>40</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book II, November 19, 1766; January 4, November 7, 1768.
- <sup>41</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book I, April 25, 1751; St. Philip's Vestry Book II, January 7, 1757; June 5, August 7, 1758; April 30, June 25, 1759.
- <sup>42</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book II, July 11, 1768. The reform impulse evinced from time to time by the churchmen of St. Philip's conflicts with David J. Rothman's interpretation in the Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston, 1971), 53. Rothman believes that the colonists "placed little faith in the possibility of reform."



<sup>43</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book I, April 22, 1751; St. Philip's Vestry Book II, December 22, 1766; October 9, 1770; "Journal of the Commons House, November 28, 1769 - September 18, 1770" (ms., South Carolina Archives, Columbia, S.C.), April 6, 1770, XXXVIII, 381.

<sup>44</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book II, June 7, July 18, 1756.

<sup>45</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book I, March 28, 1753; St. Philip's Vestry Book II, June 5, October 16, 1758; April 2, November 8, 1759.

<sup>46</sup>St. Philip's Vestry Book I, June 3, 1751; May 21, 1753; St. Philip's Vestry Book II, June 6, February 13, October 2, 1758; November 8, 25, 1759; January 21, March 22, 1760; April 15, 1761; July 6, 1762; May 1, June 12, 1764; April 29, June 19, September 9, September 29, 1766; August 17, 1767; January 2, 1769; June 25, December 4, 1770; November 26, 1771; March 30, June 22, 1772.

<sup>47</sup>For a view of the fear of the poor by Philadelphia's elite in post-Revolutionary America see John K. Alexander, "The City of Brotherly Fear: The Poor in Late Eighteenth Century Philadelphia," in Kenneth T. Jackson and Stanley K. Schultz (eds.), Cities in American History (New York, 1972), 79-97.

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## Commentaries On

### "Rich and Poor in the Port City"

#### A. Theodore W. Cart - Francis Marion College

On first reading, these papers seem to draw different conclusions from essentially similar sources. Barbara Ulmer feels that Charles Town's gentry accepted the challenges of caring for the poor, "not from fear of the unruly crowd, but with a genuine spirit of benevolence and humanitarianism" rooted in civic pride, a sense of *noblesse-oblige*, and Christian charity. Jay Fraser sees the city's "better sort" alarmed by the burgeoning number of "disorderly" poor whites whose presence increased not only taxes and crimes against property, but also intensified real and imagined threats against the public order, including the chronic fear of slave insurrection.

Upon closer examination, each addresses distinctly different questions to the evidence, most notably the St. Philip's Vestry records, and gleans support for complementary views of the motives and mechanisms of charity in colonial Charles Town. Ulmer recognizes a "desire for order" but finds it subordinate to the impulse for benevolence--the object of her search. Frase accepts and illustrates some of the same attitudes that Ulmer cites, but--drawing on lay sources such as the South Carolina Gazette and "Presentments of the Grand Jury"--seeks and finds the existence of genuine anxiety about threats to property and peace in a class-conscious society. Such binocular vision furnishes a reasonably well-focused assessment.

It would be helpful to have a more precise description of how charitable and police responsibilities were entwined in Charleston's unincorporated era. Reference to the distinction between the "deserving" or "virtuous" poor, on the one hand, and the "disorderly" poor, on the other, is useful but still confusing. The need to use the almshouse as a surrogate jail should be elaborated upon. As Ms. Ulmer points out, the Assembly failed to provide for an adequate jail facility until the passage of the Circuit Court Act in 1769, a facility finally completed in 1771, according to Carl Bridenbaugh in his seminal work on urban history in the colonial era, *Cities in Revolt*. In short, the "orderly" and the "disorderly" shared funds from the public purse



throughout most of the colonial period, despite the St. Philip's Vestry's often expressed distaste for the arrangement. Poor relief was an issue with two faces.

Given the writings cited in the footnotes, especially those by Bridenbaugh, it is difficult to identify any new interpretation in these papers. Nevertheless, Ms. Ulmer gives us a sensitive and comprehensive insight into the sources and directions of Charles Town's truly benevolent impulses, while Professor Fraser breaks new ground by documenting the "attitudes of the elite toward the growing numbers of poor whites," and by firmly showing that a pattern of anxiety similar to that previously identified in pre-revolutionary Boston, Philadelphia, and New York was present in Charles Town as well. Both authors should be thanked for carefully assembling and gracefully presenting material on South Carolina history that has lain scattered in previously published works, or hidden in primary sources--until now.

B. George B. Pruden, Jr. - Presbyterian College

These interesting papers both explore essentially the same topic, that of providing relief for the poor in pre-revolutionary Charles Town. They agree basically on the means and methods used and present ample evidence from St. Philip's Vestry records and contemporary sources to show how the poor were able to avail themselves of institutionalized benevolence. However, the authors disagree about the principal motives behind these acts of largesse. Ms. Ulmer's position is that fear was less prominent than civic pride, "a sense of noblesse oblige..., a desire for public order, ...humanitarianism...and...religious belief." Professor Fraser, on the other hand, emphasizes the city fathers' fear that poor whites might join with slaves and mount an insurrection that could destroy all they had painstakingly built.

I probably cannot resolve this disagreement to their satisfaction. Perhaps they can defend their respective interpretations and shed more light on this issue. I would only suggest that they have approached the subject from different perspectives and therefore see the "glass" as being either half-empty or half-full. Professor Fraser amply documents the separate fears engendered by the large number of slaves



and the growing number of poor whites. He has extrapolated beyond the few instances where these fears were linked--in the trials of Thomas Jeremiah and Jacob Ramos and some grand jury inquiries. Ms. Ulmer emphasizes the positive aspects of benevolence and does not seem to be convinced that such instances were significant. Professor Fraser even quotes the royal governor's denial that Jeremiah's planned uprising had white involvement. Perhaps a more detailed scrutiny among letters and papers of prominent Charlestonians of the period can help clarify the issue.

Professor Fraser appears to be applying the analysis used in Gary B. Nash's study of the three colonial cities larger than Charles Town--Boston, New York, and Philadelphia--to show that social, economic, and political conflicts in these urban centers "turned the seaport towns into crucibles of revolutionary agitation."<sup>1</sup> A central element in adding Charles Town, the fourth largest city, to that analysis would be the fear the city fathers had of volatile social conditions and the frustrations experienced in attempting to obtain a political solution with the Commons House of Assembly. This is clearly an area that could accommodate more study, and Professor Fraser has laid some substantial groundwork for it.

Regardless of which interpretation seems more plausible, both papers add useful information and insights of life in colonial Charles Town. The benevolent societies' work on behalf of their members and the community at large played a significant civic role, as did the Vestry of St. Philip's Church, during the years before Charles Town was incorporated. We also need to be reminded of how small Charles Town was in those days--not above 10,000 people before 1770, with slaves comprising half that number--and yet a high cultural standard was achieved by just a few wealthy families. That conflicts arose between Charles Town's elite and members of the Commons over the "poor white" problem bespeaks a more complex socio-political situation than is provided by the traditional rich-vs.-poor dichotomy. And the fear of slave revolts, although not a startling revelation, reminds us that the conventional and comfortable picture of benevolent masters and happy slaves is one that needs to be revised in the general mind.

In this regard, it might be useful to quote a passage written



written in 1763 by Dr. George Milligen-Johnston:

[Slaves] are in this Climate necessary, but very dangerous Domestics, their Number so much exceeding the Whites; a natural Dislike and Antipathy, that subsists between them and our *Indian* Neighbours, is a very lucky Circumstance, and for this Reason: In our Quarrels with the *Indians*, however proper and necessary it may be to give them Correction, it can never be our Interest to extirpate them, or to force them from their Lands; their Ground would be soon taken up by runaway *Negroes* from our Settlements, whose Numbers would daily increase, and quickly become more formidable Enemies than *Indians* can ever be, as they speak our Language, and would never be at a Loss for Intelligence.<sup>2</sup>

These papers properly confined their inquiry primarily to local issues. Yet the city fathers were aware of and affected by events of wider import. Both authors note the impact of the thousand or so Acadians from Nova Scotia who were brought in about 1755. Should any further research be undertaken, it would be well to include the influence of outside events. The furor caused by the Stamp Act delayed final action on a bill to establish a college in Charles Town.<sup>3</sup> Did that controversy as well as others also affect poor relief, and in what way?

This question and others must await further research. As they stand, however, these two papers deserve our attention as pioneering work in an area that is long overdue for a closer look.

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<sup>1</sup>Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>Chapman J. Milling (ed.), Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions by Governor James Glen and Doctor George Milligen-Johnston (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1951), p. 136. Italics in the original.



<sup>3</sup>J. H. Easterby, A History of the College of Charleston  
(Charleston, S. C.: Trustees of the College of Charleston,  
1935), p. 8.



## THE PUBLIC CAREER OF NATHANIEL BARKSDALE DIAL

Jerry L. Slawwhite

South Carolina has produced many political figures who have achieved national prominence. Benjamin Ryan Tillman of Edgefield, for instance, enjoyed one of the longest terms in the United States Senate. James F. Byrnes became one of the most outstanding statesmen that the state ever produced. However, some of the politicians enjoyed short careers due to personal debilitations and narrow political bases, such as John Laurens Manning Irby of Laurens County. Another individual who enjoyed only a short time in the national limelight but who was a memorable and controversial political figure was Nathaniel Barksdale Dial of Laurens County. N.B. Dial's political reputation is somewhat stained due to his lack of political talent. He should be remembered, however, not as a senatorial failure, but rather as one of the outstanding contributors to the economic resuscitation of South Carolina during the New South era.

The Dial family had its roots deep in colonial South Carolina. Many members of the family purchased land from the Crown in then Craven County, now Laurens County.<sup>1</sup> The father of Nathaniel B. Dial, Albert Dial, was one of the most respected members of Laurens County. He was a successful farmer and businessman. In addition, he was connected by marriage to another distinguished family of Laurens County through his marriage to Rebecca Barksdale on December 2, 1847.<sup>2</sup>

Nathaniel B. Dial, who was born April 24, 1862,<sup>3</sup> received his early education in the schools of Laurens County. He entered the University of Richmond and later attended Vanderbilt University and the University of Virginia law school. Following the accepted custom, Dial also read law with Colonel H.W. Ferguson of Laurens.<sup>4</sup> After he had passed the bar examinations in 1883, Dial established a legal partnership with John C. Haskell, a prominent Columbia attorney. Dial, who conducted the firm's business in Laurens and earned the reputation as "one of the foremost members of the Laurens bar," was sought for his sound judgment and good advice in business and legal matters.<sup>5</sup>



It was a natural development that Dial, who enjoyed legal success and acclaim as a public servant,<sup>6</sup> should become involved in politics. Dial's political activity must be viewed in relation to the developments in South Carolina, which is known as the Tillman Movement.<sup>8</sup>

The 1880's was a decade of declining cotton prices, caused by overproduction of cotton and the lien system. The Palmetto agrarian forces believed that the only way to change the economic situation was to capture control of the state government from the Bourbons or Conservatives, who controlled the politics of the state through their domination of the nominating convention. They had not paid, according to the agrarian leaders, sufficient attention to the economic distress of the majority of the people.<sup>9</sup>

Opposing the agrarian reformers were the old line Conservatives in Laurens County, led by B.W. Ball, Albert Dial, and many other prominent citizens. These men were primarily engaged in financial and professional undertakings--lawyers, doctors, bankers, and industrialists who supported their own social and economic class in politics.<sup>10</sup> It was into this political atmosphere that Dial began his political career.

In 1887, Dial was defeated in his first effort at elective office, when he offered for the position of town intendant and warden of Laurens. Undaunted, he offered for the office of mayor in 1888 and won to become the youngest mayor in the history of Laurens. Dial subsequently won two additional terms as mayor and sought to improve the public facilities of Laurens so that business could be more easily conducted. During his tenure as mayor Dial supervised the financial arrangements for the installation of electric lights, water system, and telephone complex. In addition, the town council encouraged the founding of a cotton mill.<sup>11</sup>

As the last years of the nineteenth century passed, Dial was in the prime of life. He had a large family, a flourishing law practice, and a budding political career. He felt the urge to enter other areas of endeavor and his attention was drawn to the needs of his town and county for industry, financial institutions, electric power, and other conveniences enjoyed by larger towns. The state needed leaders who would diversify an economy that relied too much



on cotton. The years from 1880 to 1912 saw the emergence of a new breed of businessman that began to develop the resources of the state so that economic diversification could take place. This period, known as the New South era, witnessed the creation of cotton mills, hydroelectric generating plants, and the development of banking institutions. N.B. Dial was one of these leaders.<sup>12</sup>

Dial had demonstrated ability in business affairs at an early age. His good fortune was due in part to his constructive ideas for the economic future of Laurens County. Another trait that helped Dial was his practical approach to business affairs. One life-long acquaintance, William Watts Ball--another Laurens County native--described Dial as having "displayed more business ability and acumen than any other native of Laurens that I have known..."<sup>13</sup> This was quite a tribute from a man who was never a close friend or admirer.

One of Dial's first business ventures was the formation of the People's Loan and Exchange Bank of Laurens in 1887. This undertaking saw Dial and his father working together to form one of the few banks in the up-country. The incorporators persuaded the local citizens to pledge \$53,000 for stock which was to be increased to \$150,000 in the future. N.B. Dial was elected one of the directors and his father chosen president because they were considered to be two of the more responsible individuals of the area and commanded the respect of the community.<sup>14</sup>

Three years later, in 1900, Dial was instrumental in starting another financial institution to meet the expanding business needs. The Enterprise Bank, capitalized at \$50,000, opened with Dial as its first president and one of the directors. This venture was important because of its fiscal soundness. In 1914 the Enterprise Bank was awarded a national charter as the National Enterprise Bank of Laurens under application made after the Aldrich-Vreeland Currency Act was passed in the aftermath of 'Banker's Panic' of 1907.<sup>15</sup>

The most important business enterprise that Dial ever engaged in was the erection of the Laurens Cotton Mill. This venture illustrates the idea of total community involvement in order to create an industrial institution. Agitation for a cotton mill was carried on chiefly by T.B. Crews, editor



of the Laurensville Herald, who was the most vocal of the New South exponents in the Laurens area.<sup>16</sup>

The numerous industries being built in Laurens created a demand for energy to run the machinery. A source of cheap power was needed and this eventually led Dial and his associates to undertake one of their most ambitious ventures. The best source of hydroelectric power was Ware Shoals on the Saluda River, but the cost of such an undertaking was enormous.<sup>17</sup>

There were several reasons for developing Ware Shoals. An excellent site for a dam was available and most of the power could be used by the Abbeville, Greenville, Anderson, and Laurens County areas. In addition, railroad facilities were accessible and offered a transportation system to connecting main lines nearby. The most important reason, however, was that most of the cotton that was grown around Ware Shoals was sent to the factories at Pelzer, South Carolina, located twenty-four miles north. If built, the Ware Shoals Cotton Mill could process 40,000 bales of cotton per year and would provide home employment for Laurens County workers.<sup>18</sup>

Dial was elected as one of the directors of Ware Shoals and the full board appointed him president of the company. It was fitting that Dial should head the company because he had "raised more money for Ware Shoals Manufacturing Company than ever before got by one man in South Carolina for one industry." In fact, Dial was credited with accomplishing the larger part "of industrial development for this part of South Carolina."<sup>19</sup>

As Dial's business interests prospered,<sup>20</sup> so did his ambition, and he sought to crown a successful public career by gaining a seat in the United States Senate. His major target was the dean of South Carolina politicians, Benjamin Ryan Tillman.

Dial was joined in his 1912 challenge to Tillman by W. Jasper Talbert, a former Tillmanite from Edgefield. Talbert, who had broken with Tillman in 1891 over the Sub-treasury Plan sponsored by the Farmer's Alliance, was not regarded as a serious threat to Tillman and this may have been one factor that influenced Dial to enter the campaign. In addition, the aging senator was suffering from poor health, but the Laurens



Advertiser editorialized that despite his infirmities, Tillman could "win re-election without making a speech."<sup>21</sup>

During the campaign, Dial was portrayed as a candidate with an abundance of "sound common sense" and a "thorough businessman." In addition, Dial was careful not to offend Tillman's friends who might be suspicious of the Laurens industrialist's wealth. Dial assured his audiences that he was not in the campaign to villify any of the candidates and stressed his business experience and how he would apply it in Washington. Dial desired banking reform so that money would be more available to build businesses to benefit the people.<sup>22</sup> He supported the creation of cotton storage warehouses to help the farmers and said that he wanted to "develop the resources of the state...and to do something for the people" who were handicapped by a shortage of money. He also told his audiences that his platform marked him as a progressive candidate, but that as a businessman he "would stand for rigid economy" in government.<sup>23</sup>

The primary election was held on August 27, 1912, and the final count proved that Tillman's popularity in the state was still sufficient to keep him in office. The Edgefield senator received about 6,000 more votes than Talbert and Dial combined. Dial ran third and carried only Laurens County, where he led by only 101 votes. Talbert polled 8,000 more votes than Dial.<sup>24</sup>

From 1912 to 1918, politics was never far from Dial's mind, and, as the senatorial campaign of 1918 approached, attention focused on the maneuvering of potential candidates. In 1916 Jasper Talbert and William P. Pollock announced that they would enter the contest for Tillman's seat. The senator had stated in 1914 that he would not seek another term, but Dial did not believe that Tillman would keep his word.<sup>25</sup>

On March 7, 1917, Tillman announced that he would seek re-election. In addition, he said that he would not campaign actively because it was essential that he remain in Washington due to the crisis generated by World War One. One factor that caused Tillman to seek a fifth term was the presence of Coleman Livingston Blease in the senatorial race. The former governor had opposed United States entry into the war and was also accused of disloyalty to the Democratic party



and was scored for his pro-German attitude. In order to defeat Blease, A. Frank Lever, a member of the House of Representatives from the Seventh Congressional district and the House Agriculture Committee, entered the race because he believed that Tillman was too weak to defeat Blease.<sup>25</sup> Lever's primary function in the campaign was to "emphasize the war effort" and to defeat Blease.<sup>26</sup> Tillman was furious because Lever's entrance signified that President Woodrow Wilson had no confidence that the senator could defeat Blease. It also meant that state leaders, led by Governor Richard I. Manning, had written Tillman off as a powerful influence. Tillman would not retire gracefully, and his refusal to do so was seen as an egotistical move that would split the party and result in the election of Blease.<sup>27</sup>

The ranks of the senatorial campaign were swollen by the entrance of James A. Rice of Anderson, who was making his first attempt at a statewide election. Then, a few days before the campaign officially opened, Lever, who was needed in Congress, withdrew from the race at the request of President Wilson. This left only a lackluster Dial, an unknown Rice, and the absentee senator to face the challenge posed by Cole-L. Blease.<sup>28</sup>

The goal of the anti-Bleasites in the 1918 campaign was the defeat of Blease, who had entered politics in 1890 as a supporter of Tillman. He had engaged in politics at various levels and had run for office at every opportunity. His scandal-ridden governorship, 1911-1915, was one of the stormiest in South Carolina History.<sup>29</sup> His political success was chiefly due to his good fortune in facing a divided opposition in the Democratic primary elections. In addition, Blease was an excellent stump speaker, who appealed to racial and class prejudices to develop a loyal following of textile workers and small farmers.<sup>30</sup>

The opposition to Blease was led by newspaper editors, lawyers, ministers, and others who spoke for middle-class values threatened by Blease. The leading journalistic spokesman was William Watts Ball, editor of The State and founder and owner of the Laurens Advertiser. Their chief problem in 1918 was to hold the anti-Bleasite faction together in support of one candidate.<sup>31</sup>



The senate campaign opened on June 17 at Winnsboro. The crowd was small because Tillman and Blease, who refused to follow the campaign itinerary, were absent, so Dial and Rice had the platform to themselves. Dial scored Blease for his anti-war utterances and said that Tillman's chief talent was "of a destructive character." Of his own participation in the race, Dial offered himself as an alternative to the "thousands who would not support Tillman or Blease and would 'go fishing' on election day."<sup>32</sup>

Dial was not completely candid in presenting his reasons for entering the race. He was, in the opinion of William Watts Ball, a person of ability and energy but was also consumed by personal ambition. As a politician, Dial had much to recommend him for the consideration of the voters. He was "intelligently and deeply interested in the development of South Carolina's resources" and was very well posted on agricultural conditions in the state. He was also assisted by his reputation of being a successful businessman, although rumors of his wealth turned some voters against him. Dial also possessed a large repertoire of jokes, which aided him on the stump, and his factual arguments were well organized and logical. Dial also possessed a great deal of personal courage.<sup>33</sup>

But the Laurens industrialist also had political liabilities. He was "slovenly of speech" and lacked the personality to excite his audience. He presented his views in a manner that made him appear as if he were addressing a jury. Another feature of Dial's personality was his lack of dignity. Dial did not, in the opinion of Ball, present a picture of a man who possessed wisdom. In brief, he did "not look wise."<sup>34</sup>

On July 3, 1918, the most important event of the campaign occurred. On June 29, Senator Tillman suffered another stroke. In less than a week he was dead.<sup>35</sup>

Following Tillman's death, there were attempts to allow new candidates to offer for the full term campaign. Such action, Ball feared, might make possible the election of Blease, since additional candidates would split the votes that should go to one anti-Bleasite candidate. The state Democratic executive committee was urged by Blease forces to reopen the campaign list, while the other side applied pressure to keep it closed. The Blease forces lost this contest.<sup>36</sup>



With Blease weakened by his anti-war position, his enemies decided to rally behind Dial "and make the best of it." Dial was not the most appealing candidate, but Blease had become so objectionable that the Laurens industrialist became an acceptable alternative. Dial had had the audacity to face Tillman and Blease before circumstances had removed one, and made the other temporarily vulnerable. Dial was the beneficiary of fortunate circumstances, but he had also been courageous enough to enter the list when he stood little chance of success. In addition, Dial was the only candidate who was fairly well known, a loyal Democrat with proven ability and capacity for the job.<sup>37</sup>

As the campaign moved toward its conclusion it became apparent that Dial's attacks on Blease cost the former governor heavily. Another factor in Dial's winning campaign was the wave of emotionalism generated by America's entry in the World War. In 1918 patriotism ran rampant and Dial took advantage of it. In his speeches, he equated loyalty to Woodrow Wilson, the United States, and himself. Blease was painted as "disloyal," "pro-German" or worse. Exploitation of the patriotism issue was led by Christie Benet, a Columbia attorney and candidate for the short term, who used the issue to defeat Blease rather than to elect Dial.<sup>38</sup>

The primary election was held on August 28, 1918. Dial received 59 percent of the total vote cast. Of the forty-five counties, Blease carried only Aiken, Saluda, Cherokee, and Pickens.<sup>39</sup>

The victory of Dial in the 1918 election has been described as a political accident.<sup>40</sup> He was, nevertheless, regarded as an individual of sound judgment, even temperament, and solid character. Dial was a responsible citizen and well qualified for the senate. In addition, his loyalty to the Democratic Party had not been impugned as was Blease's loyalty to his country. While not a firey stump speaker, he did give the appearance of the more stable of the candidates. However, Dial compensated for this by using the inflammatory utterances of Blease, without attacking Blease personally, to the destruction of the former governor.<sup>41</sup>

Dial's success could also be traced to the nature of the campaign itself. Dial and his advisors--Ball, Waring, Heyward, and Benet--wisely established the issue of the campaign early.



They portrayed Dial as the one hope for the redemption of South Carolina politics from the Blease tactics. Dial was, contrasted with Blease, a man of high moral character who did not have rumors of scandal and bitter political recriminations hounding his footsteps. Neither Blease nor Tillman was as fortunate. Tillman was well known for his untimely remark "to hell with the Constitution," but it was Blease whose name was associated with disloyalty.<sup>42</sup>

Dial won Tillman's senate seat in 1918. But there was reason to doubt that he understood the circumstances that had catapulted him into power. Ball attempted to give Dial some excellent advice to insure his success, but had reservations as to the result. Indeed, Ball doubted that Dial would win re-election in 1924.<sup>43</sup>

Ball's assessment proved to be correct. Dial failed to distinguish himself in six years in the senate. While he was faithful in attending committee meetings and missed few senate votes, he immediately ran into difficulty with his colleagues and constituents.<sup>44</sup>

The freshman senator was hurt at home in his controversy with J. William Thurmond of Edgefield, who had been the federal attorney for the western district of the state. Thurmond had not been reappointed to the position and blamed Dial for opposing his nomination. Thurmond had been Tillman's campaign manager in 1912 and had favored opening the lists after Tillman's death in 1918. Dial denied the charges of animosity toward Thurmond or any former Tillmanites, but the controversy in the state press weakened Dial's support in the state among Tillman's supporters.<sup>45</sup>

In the senate, Dial was particularly irate and vocal in his opposition to pension legislation and the cash bonus provision in the Veterans Adjustment Compensation Act. Dial admitted that his attitude toward the bonus was out of harmony with the majority and that the legislation would pass. President Warren Harding, however, vetoed the measure and Dial voted to sustain the President. This action was supported by many newspaper editors in South Carolina and some of his constituents applauded him for possessing "the courage of your convictions." Dial said that the bonus, in the minds of some citizens, was "not near as popular as some Congressmen think,"



but it was known that "Congress is full of cowards (who)... voted against their own convictions."<sup>46</sup> The ever-present veterans' lobby never forgave Dial.

When Dial returned to South Carolina to seek renomination, the only serious campaign preparations that he had made was to write letters to constituents asking for their support. Two days, in fact, before the campaign formally began, he was still without the services of a state campaign manager. This stemmed from Dial's ignorance of a political organization and the importance of reaching the masses through personal contact.<sup>47</sup>

The senator also ignored other danger signals. Blease had been campaigning for nearly two years. In addition, the disloyalty issue of 1918 had dissipated by 1924 and Blease had regained his former strength. Dignified and restrained, his speeches were shorn of the rhetoric that had electrified his followers in years past.<sup>48</sup>

Another candidate, Congressman James F. Byrnes of Aiken, also challenged Dial. Byrnes had returned home several weeks previous to campaign, but Dial had remained in Washington to vote on every bill that came to the floor of the senate. The entry of Byrnes worried Dial's followers because the fourteen year veteran of Congress was a talented and intelligent campaigner and could hurt the senator badly.<sup>49</sup>

The ranks of the candidates increased to four with the entrance of John J. McMahan, insurance commissioner of South Carolina. McMahan, a former superintendent of education, had served in the State House of Representatives and sought public office on many previous occasions. There was much speculation as to why McMahan had filed for the campaign only three days prior to its beginning and he was not taken seriously by many of the voters.<sup>50</sup>

Dial support came from anti-Tillamite Conservatives and some of these were siphoned off by the entrance of Byrnes. The fear of William Watts Ball--that divided ranks would enable Blease to win--was about to be realized.<sup>51</sup>

The campaign seemed to overlook the presence of Blease, who worked diligently to develop his new image. Throughout



all the meetings, he "conducted a highly creditable campaign," and was assured a spot if a runoff was necessary. He presented the voters with a variety of platitudes--reduced taxes, better education, states' rights, good roads, and support of the Volstead amendment. He did not arouse the passions of his followers, and he ignored his opponents.<sup>52</sup> In keeping with his new identity, Blease even urged "the restoration of family prayer as a cure for war."<sup>53</sup>

On August 26, 1924, the primary election was held and the results were predictable. Blease led the field with Byrnes a close second and Dial a poor third.<sup>54</sup>

Two years later, in 1926, Dial unsuccessfully attempted to regain a senate seat at the expense of his former colleague, Senator E.D. Smith. Since he did not have a statewide political organization and because of his continued political naivete, Dial ran third in a three man race. His record was remembered, his speeches lacked fire, and his personal appeal was uninspiring. Thus, his defeat was predictable.<sup>55</sup>

Dial's failure in politics illuminates his inability to approach public problems with the degree of flexibility that is necessary for success in public office. During the decade of the 1920's, the national mood changed from one of austerity and self-sacrifice to one of economic liberalism. Dial sought to retain fiscal conservatism in a Congress dedicated to free spending. He sought to enforce the values of thrift, honesty, and individual responsibility during a decade of high taxes, dishonesty, and public irresponsibility. His abrasive mannerism and caustic speeches caused him to lose public support. His arrogance and his wealth prompted many people to regard his political ambition with suspicion.

The real story of N.B. Dial is found in his outstanding contributions to the economic development of his state. As a businessman Dial had few peers. When he left industrial pursuits and entered the political arena, he experienced only one victory in four attempts to gain a United States Senate seat. His public record may justify the label of "political accident," but his achievements in helping to create a better economic life for his fellow South Carolinians will stamp him as one of the most progressive New South architects.



<sup>1</sup>C.F. Colletson to N.B. Dial, May 25, 1934, in Dial MSS, Perkins Library, Duke University; George Dial to Rebecca Dial, September 30, October 8, 1937; May 19, 1941, in Dial, Reminiscences. This collection is the personal property of Miss Rebecca Dial, daughter of Nathaniel Barksdale Dial, of Falls Church, Virginia, and consists of letters from family members, newspapers, notes, and dictated memoirs of N.B. Dial. The author wishes to thank Miss Dial for allowing access to this collection.

A brief genealogical outline of the Dial family is found in J.C. Hemphill, Men of Mark in South Carolina, Ideals of American Life, A Collection of Biographies of Leading Men of the State (Washington, D.C.: Men of Mark Publishing Company, 1908), III, 130-132; David Duncan Wallace, History of South Carolina (New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1920), IV, 8-9; Mary Sudduth Stoddard (compiler), Stoddard-Sudduth Papers (n.p.; n.d), pp. 124-127, Laurens Advertiser, July 22, 1903.

The early Dials spelled their name several different ways: Dyel, Dyall, Doyle, Doyill, and Diel. For the exact location and acreage of early grants to the family members, see Township Grants, 1734-1738, vol. 41, p. 329; Royal Grants, 1752-1754, vol. 5, p. 82; Memorials, 1765-1768, IX, part II, p. 408; 1774-1775, XII, p. 160; Laurens County, Record of Wills, 1802-1809, I, C-1, p. 114, all in the South Carolina Department of Archives, Columbia, South Carolina.

<sup>2</sup>Emma Gray to Rebecca Dial, February 27, 1941, in Dial, Reminiscences; Laurensville Herald, February 25, 1898; Clinton Chronicle, August 19, 1956; Edward McCrady, Jr., and Samuel A. Ash, Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas of the Nineteenth Century (Madison: Brant and Fuller, 1892), pp. 398-399.

<sup>3</sup>Daddy to Mrs. Eva Dial, May 13, 1933, in Dial MSS, Duke University; The State, December 12, 14, 1940; J.C. Garlington, Men of the Time, pp. 112-113; J.C. Hemphill, Men of Mark in South Carolina, III, 130-132; Congressional Directory, 66th Congress, 1st Session, July 1919, p. 104; Official Congressional Directory for the Use of the United States Congress, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1924), 68th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 101; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 856.



<sup>4</sup>Laurensville Herald, June 15, 1880, July 14, 1882; Vanderbilt University, Catalogue of Students, 1881, p. 13; Vanderbilt University, Alumni Directory, 1923, p. 154; Vanderbilt University, Alumni Locator Card, in possession of the author; Vanderbilt University Alumnus Magazine, May-June, 1924; University of Virginia Matriculation Book, 1883. See also N.B. Dial to J.W. Norwood, April 7, 1933, Dial MSS.

<sup>5</sup>Laurensville Herald, July 14, 1882, June 12, 1891, March 25, 1898; News and Courier, November 25, 1889; Laurens Advertiser, March 17, 1891.

<sup>6</sup>One of the most important reasons for Dial's popularity was that he "did things first class." Laurensville Herald, July 20, 1888, November 13, 1891, December 25, 1896, April 9, 1897; News and Courier, November 25, 1889; Laurens Advertiser, March 17, 1891, June 1, 1906.

<sup>7</sup>Report of the State Board of Public Health in Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina (Columbia: Calvo and Patton, State Printers, 1886), II, 71.

<sup>8</sup>For a Bourbon view of politics in Laurens County, see William Watts Ball, The State That Forgot: South Carolina's Surrender to Democracy (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1932), p. 202 and passim.

For succinct observations on some major leaders in the Tillman Movement, see News and Courier, March 1, 1895; George R. Keoster, "Bleaseism," Yates Snowden Collection, Chapter 5, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina; Edwin Parker McCravy, Memories (Greenville: Observer Printing Company, 1941), pp. 20-21.

<sup>9</sup>Francis Butler Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman: South Carolinian (Glouster, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1946).

<sup>10</sup>Laurensville Herald, June 20, 27, 1890. For a recent study of the Bourbon era, see William J. Cooper, Jr., The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877-1890 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1968). Bourbonism in the South is analyzed in Comer Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1931 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), pp. 75-106.



<sup>11</sup>Laurensville Herald, March 2, April 6, May 25, June 1, 8, 15, July 20, September 14, November 16, December 14, 1888; Laurens Advertiser, March 19, April 28, June 2, August 20, 1895.

<sup>12</sup>For the overall effect of Reconstruction in the state, see Francis Butler Simkins and Robert Hilliard Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932). The events in Laurens County during Reconstruction are revealed in Rosser H. Taylor and Raven I. McDavid (eds.), Memoirs of Richard Cannon Watts (Columbia: The R.L. Bryan Company, 1938), pp. 1-19, and Ball, State That Forgot, p. 140 and passim. Violence in Laurens County during the period is reported in the Laurensville Herald, April 12, 26, May 3, 1872.

<sup>13</sup>William Watts Ball, Diary, June 18, 1918, IV, 3-6, in Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. The author would like to express his appreciation to Mrs. Hewett-Myring, sister of the late W.W. Ball, for her permission to use his diary. See also Laurens Advertiser, February 22, 1898.

<sup>14</sup>Laurensville Herald, June 3, July 15, 1887; Laurens Advertiser, February 22, 1898; "Report of Railroad Commissioner" in Reports and Resolutions, 1888, II, 89, 92; J.W. Norwood to Rebecca Dial, March 20, 1941, in Dial, Reminiscences.

<sup>15</sup>Laurensville Herald, January 12, April 13, 1900; August 28, 30, 1901; September 4, 1914; Laurens Advertiser, March 7, 1900; "Repo of Secretary of State" in Reports and Resolutions, 1901 II, pp. 819, 832.

<sup>16</sup>Laurensville Herald, March 25, April 1, 8, 1887; February 8, 1895; "Report of Secretary of State" in Reports and Resolutions, 1896, I, 28.

<sup>17</sup>Savannah News, May 21, 1890; Laurensville Herald, May 23, 1890.

<sup>18</sup>Laurensville Herald, May 30, 1890.

<sup>19</sup>Laurens Advertiser, March 20, 1901; April 23, 1904; July 28, October 4, 1905; March 21, May 23, 1906; Laurensville Herald,



October 3, 1902; July 28, 1905; Reports and Resolutions, 1902, II, pp. 2001-2012.

<sup>20</sup>Ball, Diary, June 18, 1918, IV, 3-6. Dial's wealth was estimated by Ball in 1918 to be approximately \$150,000.

<sup>21</sup>Laurens Advertiser, September 20, 1911. Tillman was confident that he could defeat any challenger despite his poor health. "I can either wallop the whole crowd or none of them... I think I will get more votes than any and all of the men who will likely come out against me." Tillman to J. William Thurmond, May 16, 1912; Tillman to Dr. Edwin S. Joynes, June 22, 1912; Tillman to Woodrow Wilson, July 6, 1912, in Tillman Papers, Clemson University.

<sup>22</sup>See editorial comments from the state press in Laurensville Herald, April 12, 1912.

<sup>23</sup>Laurens Advertiser, April 17, May 1, 1912; Laurensville Herald, April 19, 26, 1912.

<sup>24</sup>News and Courier, August 27, 28, 29, 1912. The final tally was Tillman 62,716; Talbert 32,044; Dial 24,407. In Laurens County, Dial received 1522; Tillman, 1421; Talbert, 1126. Laurensville Herald, August 30, 1912.

<sup>25</sup>The State, June 1, 1916; Laurensville Herald, June 2, October 27, November 3, 1916; February 2, 1917. See also A.E. Gonzalez to W.W. Ball, June 17, 1916, Ball MSS; Ball, Diary, June 19, 1918, IV, 8.

<sup>26</sup>Laurens Advertiser, February 28, 1917; Laurensville Herald, March 2, 1917, March 8, 1918. The issue of disloyalty on the part of Blease was created by Governor Richard I. Manning. See Terry Lynn Helsley, "Voices of Dissent: The Antiwar Movement and the State Council of Defense in South Carolina, 1916-1918," Masters thesis, University of South Carolina, 1974, pp. 1-3, 83-91.

<sup>27</sup>Manning to Tillman, June 1, 1918; S.W. Scruggs to Manning, June 4, 1918; C.J. Ramage to Manning, June 4, 1918; Lindsay Patterson to Manning, June 14, 1918; Manning to Patterson, June 19, 1918, Manning MSS; Laurens Advertiser, June 5, 1918.



<sup>28</sup>Columbia Record, June 14, 17, 1918; Spartanburg Herald, June 14, 1918; News and Courier, June 14, 1918; Charlotte Observer, June 4, 1918; Ball, Diary, June 15, 16, 1918, III, 200; McCravy, Memories, p. 46.

<sup>29</sup>Thomas F. McDow to Ball, September 13, 1912; John Cauthen to Ball, April 17, 1913; John B. Reeves to Ball, April 18, 1913; Thomas R. Waring to Ball, April 20, 1913, William Watts Ball Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University.

The career of Coleman L. Blease is traced in Daniel W. Hollis, "Coleman L. Blease," Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement III, 1973, pp. 77-78.

<sup>30</sup>Waring to Ball, September 16, 1912; Ball to Waring, September 20, 1912; C.C. Featherstone to John Gary Evans, July 11, 1914; F.B. Geier to Evans, July 11, 1914; David Duncan Wallace to Ball, July 28, 1914, Ball MSS.

<sup>31</sup>In addition to Ball, opposition to Blease included Thomas R. Waring, editor of the Charleston Evening Post; David Duncan Wallace, prominent historian and scholar; John Gary Evans, former governor and chairman of the state Democratic executive committee; former governor Duncan C. Heyward and lawyers such as Thomas F. McDow of York. McDow to Ball, September 13, 1912; D. Hutchinson to A.E. Gonzalez, July 23, 1914; J.B. Park to Ball, August 21, 1914; Ball to A.F. McKissick, September 4, 1916; Ball to McDow, October 16, 1916, Ball MSS.

<sup>32</sup>The State, June 18, 1918: Columbia Record, June 18, 1918; Spartanburg Herald, June 19, 1918. With his customary bravado, Blease said, "I did not propose to be a drawing card for those who have absolutely no chance in the senatorial race." He intended to conduct his own independent campaign. Laurensville Herald, May 31, 1918; News and Courier, June 17, 1918.

<sup>33</sup>W.W. Ball to David F. Houston, January 31, 1916; McDow to Ball, August 10, 1918; Ball to Theodore D. Jervey, June 2, 1919, Ball MSS; Ball, Diary, November 24, 1916, I, 66. One Laurens banker supported Dial "for the good of the state," and admitted that he possessed "some good qualities (as all men have) but his greed and selfishness have cooled my ardor for him in recent years." H.K. Aiken to Ball, August 19, 1918, Ball MSS.



<sup>34</sup>Ball, Diary, June 18, 1918, IV, 3-6.

<sup>35</sup>Columbia Record, June 30, July 1, 2, 3, 1918.

<sup>36</sup>John B. Adger to Manning, July 3, 1918; John F. Grace to Manning, July 6, 1918; Herbert A. Moses to Manning, July 6, 1918; Lewis W. Perrin to Manning, July 8, 1918; A.N. Wood to Manning, July 26, 1918, Manning MSS. See also Barnwell People, July 17, 1918. Ball confided that if the lists had been reopened, "it would have been ruinous to Dial's prospects..." Ball, Diary, July 11, 1918, IV, 54. Blease believed that Dial was "a nondescript who was adopted by the party when the lists were not reopened." Spartanburg Herald, July 21, 1918.

<sup>37</sup>C. St. G. Sinkler to Manning, July 31, 1918; Manning to Sinkler, August 21, 1918, Manning MSS; Columbia Record, July 10, 11, 1918.

<sup>38</sup>L.M. Green to Manning, August 21, 1918; Manning to Green, August 23, 1918; H.N. Edmunds to Manning, August 23, 1918; Manning to J.R. Boyd, August 30, 1918, Manning MSS; The State, August 28, 1918.

<sup>39</sup>Ball, Diary, August 22, 1918, IV, 143. The election totals were Dial 65, 064; Blease 40,456; Rice 5,317. Green-ville Daily News, August 30, 1918.

<sup>40</sup>Wallace, History of South Carolina, III, p. 450; Frank E. Jordan, The Primary State: A History of the Democratic Party in South Carolina, 1896-1962 (n.p., 1968), pp. 64-67. The term 'political accident' was probably originated by J. William Thurmond of Aiken, who was denied reappointment as the western district federal attorney through the efforts of Dial. Thurmond's outburst was printed in the state press: "I leave Senator Dial, the greatest political accident the state ever had, to revel in his own littleness, bitterness, and arrogance." Yorkville Enquirer, August 22, 1921.

<sup>41</sup>McDow to Ball, August 8, 1918; Ball to Theodore D. Jervey, June 2, 1919, Ball MSS; Ball, Diary, June 18, 1918, IV, 3-6; June 19, 1918, IV, 8; August 25, 1918, IV, 148; The State, November 24, 1918.



A.A. Bristow to Dial, March 5, 1924, Dial MSS; D.M. Douglas to Dial, August 22, 1924, Latimer MSS, South Caroliniana Library.

Byrnes was an ambitious individual. See Winfred Bobo Moore, Jr., "New South Spokesman: The Political Career of James Francis Byrnes, 1911-1941" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1975), p. 70.

<sup>50</sup>Ball, Diary, August 11, 1924, VI, 216-217; Columbia Record, June 9, 1924; The State, June 10, 1924. Ball felt that the basic problem was with the state political system that permitted a man like McMahan, whom the editor described as a "crank, clown, or crazed person" to "enter a contest for high office." The former superintendant of education did much damage to Dial. "Poor, deluded, scatterbrained McMahan." Ball, Diary, September 12, 1924, VI, 226-228.

<sup>51</sup>Edgar F. Brown to Dial, April 19, 1924, Dial MSS.

<sup>52</sup>Dial to Ball, August 7, 1924, Ball MSS; Leroy Springs to Dial, July 25, 1924, Dial MSS; Laurensville Herald, July 11, 1924; Charleston Evening Post, August 4, 5, 6, 7, 1924.

<sup>53</sup>A.E. Gonzalez to Ball, August 29, 1924; Waring to Ball, September 6, 1924, Ball MSS; Ball, Diary, August 12, 1924, VI, 217; Dial to Allen Johnston, September 9, 1924; Dial to J.J. Dunn, September 14, 1924, Dial MSS; McCravy, Memories, pp. 46-48. Dial took his revenge on Byrnes by not endorsing the Congressman. This was tantamount to supporting Blease. "The election turned out as we expected it. If I can be of any assistance...please feel at liberty to call on me." Dial to Blease, September 12, 1924, Dial MSS.

<sup>54</sup>New York Times, August 28, 1924; Yorkville Enquirer, August 29, 1924.

<sup>55</sup>The final tally was Smith, 72,015; Edgar F. Brown, 65,331; Dial, 34,144. Pee Dee Advocate, September 2, 1926.



## PRISONERS ALL - THE SLAVE AND JAMES LOUIS PETIGRU

Lyon G. Tyler

James Louis Petigru (1789-1863) of Charleston, South Carolina, was the man, who "Unawed by Opinion, Unseduced by Flattery, and Undismayed by Disaster," opposed the Nullifiers and the Secessionists of his native state with all the fervor of a Biblical prophet and yet never lost their affection and respect. Leaders of the bar have acclaimed him South Carolina's greatest lawyer, but his celebrated epitaph in St. Michael's churchyard in Charleston predicts that "future times will hardly know how great a life this simple stone commemorates."

Petigru was born the year the Federal Constitution was ratified. He was a child, not of the Revolution, but of the consolidation of that Revolution. He believed in order yet possessed a passionate attachment to justice. According to his epitaph, "his eloquence was the protection of the poor and wronged," but he lived in a class-ridden society where slavery was the central fact of life.

On many occasions an advocate of the rights of black men, aware of a common humanity and of the basic immorality of slavery, Petigru was deeply involved as attorney and slave owner in that system. Though much has been and continues to be written about slavery in antebellum South Carolina, an examination of the life of this distinctive, yet often typical, South Carolinian may help us to understand how an enlightened libertarian could co-exist with what seems to us an unmitigated evil.

Petigru was at home in the "Holy City" of Charleston and in the Palmetto State, comfortable in and a part of its way of life, but he could see beyond the range of most of his contemporaries. While he accepted as inevitable many of the imperfections of human society, he maintained a vision, seldom obscured by prejudice or easy rationalizations, of the universal brotherhood of man. Petigru had his faults, but most of his contemporaries agreed that he was so human and so natural that all who knew him loved him, whether they might be old or young, rich or poor, white or black, slave or free.



In the early 1830's Petigru became the mostly absentee owner of a rice plantation on the Savannah River, where for a few years he and his family sometimes spent the winter months.<sup>1</sup> The owner found that, though his yield was acceptable, his net income was negligible. "The only thing," he wrote, "to flatter my vanity as a proprietor is the evident and striking improvement in the moral and physical condition of the negroes since they have been under my administration. When I took them they were naked and destitute; now, there is hardly one that has not a pig, at least; and with few exceptions, they can kill their own poultry whenever they please."<sup>2</sup> In the absence of profit, only his humanity could provide sufficient motive for taking an interest in the well-being of his slaves.

Even after the sale of his plantation and a series of financial reverses, Petigru continued to support an extraordinarily large entourage. According to the census of 1840, he possessed at least thirty-eight slaves in Charleston. Twenty of these were male, of whom two were children under ten years of age, and eighteen were females, with five being under ten and one in the elderly category.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to his Charleston slaves, Petigru had a considerable interest, ranging from the proprietary to the affectionate, in the slaves at his boyhood home "Badwell" in Abbeville District, who after 1836 were under the control of his widowed sister, Jane Petigru North. Petigru had inherited two slaves, reputed to be of royal descent, Prince and Thomas. Prince asked for and received his freedom on the ground of long and faithful service, but Thomas declined Petigru's offer of freedom.

Thomas spent most of his time at "Badwell" but made yearly visits to Mr. Petigru's abode. Petigru gave him a regular annuity and after dinner, when Thomas was in Charleston, would serve him a brandy, and the two would sit on the back steps of the house and swap stories of boyhood days.<sup>4</sup> "The old Tom goes up perfectly satisfied, I believe with his journey," wrote Petigru. "He seemed indeed to feel like a person on fairy ground, and his observations...will furnish comments for the servants hall at Badwell for many days." From his visits Tom returned laden down with gifts for himself and the other servants.<sup>5</sup>



The inscription, perhaps written by Petigru, on "Daddy Tom's" tombstone next to the family graveyard at "Badwell" noted that his "cheerful obedience and willingness to work" caused him to be "treated as a friend" and "buried like a Christian."<sup>6</sup> Though master and slave could be friend, obedience was the only course open to the slave.

A recent article has emphasized that low-country slave owners saw themselves as patriarchs, as providers and protectors of their extended households, family and non-family, black and white, slave and free.<sup>7</sup> Petigru was much the patriarch, though an indulgent one.

"The relation between the family and the servants of the house" in the typical Charleston home, wrote an outsider who called on Petigru in 1860, "was one of friendship and seemingly almost of equality."<sup>8</sup> This spirit certainly animates the following quotation from a letter to his sister at "Badwell":

"I wish to be remembered to all the servants, distinguishing Andrew as the head man and Katy as the mother of the tribe. Not forgetting Charlotte as the head of the culinary department nor Marcus as the Tubal Cain of the community, hoping that they will continue to set a good example and that the young ones will walk in their footsteps. Wishing whatever is good to Brother Jack and Tempe, I embrace the sisterhood and girls."<sup>9</sup>

The thinking here is definitely hierarchical, but one must be in the know to discern where the references to slaves leave off and those to the family begin.

Petigru had a number of pet projects at "Badwell." The digging of a new well ("Badwell" was aptly named) was one, but above all he wanted to create an avenue of white oaks along the entrance road as "my only chance of going down to posterity."<sup>10</sup> Petigru's letters to his sister are filled with directions to "Old Tom" and others to gather acorns and to plant and water the trees. Petigru recognized that men, whether slave or free, have need of encouragement. "Praise Tony," he wrote, "for my plants and everything that he has done well, and tell him my hopes are great that his work this time will



not suffer by comparison with what he effected when Marcus was gone."<sup>11</sup>

Petigru was capable of forgetting his tender humanity in the presence of a great outrage. When one Felix let a fire get out of control and damage some of the cherished oaks on his memorial avenue, Petigru felt that this act should bring "a blush of shame to every sable cheek...of the Badwell tribe." He hoped that Felix had had a flogging, and if he could have been "sure that it would prevent all such accidents in the future," Petigru would have given Felix one more.<sup>12</sup> When another slave chopped off the limbs of one of the oaks, Petigru exploded with a quotation "from some Latin author, 'that something monstrous is always produced by unhappy Africa.'"<sup>13</sup>

One of Petigru's household slaves ran away in 1849. First, complained Petigru, Hamlet had taken money "out of my purse," then he took the purse itself. This "great depravity" caused Petigru to vow that if it were possible he "would heartily agree never to see a Negro again." Petigru had intended to have Hamlet "corrected," but Hamlet had anticipated the judgment and fled.<sup>14</sup> Presumably, Petigru had contemplated sending Hamlet to the Charleston Work House for punishment.

Hamlet subsequently returned to his master and, corrected or not, reformed. At one point, Petigru apprenticed him to his noted cook, Daddy Lunnon, but "Daddy's" discipline was harsher than Petigru's. When Hamlet, with bandaged head, complained to Petigru that "Daddy" had attacked him with a stick of wood, Daddy Lunnon, after being assured that his cooking suited Mr. Petigru, allegedly bested his master by declaring, "I learned my trade from Davie Deas and the same Davie Deas do for me, I do for Hamlet."<sup>15</sup>

Hamlet became a good cook, but since he did not enjoy cooking, persuaded Mr. Petigru to let him be a carpenter. In later years Hamlet apparently metamorphosed into a preacher.<sup>16</sup>

Petigru managed property for his cousin, Susan P. Webb of Walterborough. As part of their arrangement, Miss Webb hired out to Petigru a slave named Toney, for whom Petigru paid her wages. Petigru might have purchased Toney, but he wanted to be sure the lady had sufficient income.<sup>17</sup>



Toney got himself involved in a major altercation in 1853 with Richard, a free negro stable-keeper, who accused Toney of poisoning his horses. Petigru immediately wrote Richard's guardian for assistance in ending the quarrel. According to Petigru, the accusation was "nothing more than the expression of general ill will," and he was sure Richard "did not believe it himself." "Toney is a man," Petigru continued, "that has the confidence of his owner and of course a character among people of his degree that he would not like to lose." Richard must "learn that even a Negro's character is of some account and must be respected by another negro."<sup>18</sup>

In 1861 we hear of Toney again. Mr. and Mrs. Petigru boarded their carriage to catch the train to Summerville, where they spent much of their time during the war years. "Toney was on the box," recounted Petigru, "far gone in liquor, much farther indeed than I thought." Mrs. Petigru insisted on conducting a spirited conversation with Toney, and, when Toney turned around to make a point, he drove off the street "at a furious rate" into a pine tree with such force that the springs of the carriage were driven four or five inches into the paunch of one of the horses. A quick-witted slave named Sammy who was riding with them prevented further injury. In a letter to Susan Webb, Petigru seems to have been far more perturbed by Mrs. Petigru's loquaciousness than by Toney's dissipation.<sup>19</sup>

By his own admission Petigru had mellowed in his attitude concerning the discipline of slaves. Arriving in Summerville for his last summer in 1862, Petigru had to let Sandy "from his small stock" advance the money to recover their baggage. Later the railroad agent told Petigru he had been on the verge of thrashing Sandy for impudence because the Negro had referred to him as "Old Prescott." "I told him," Petigru recounted, "he was lucky he had gone no further, for if he had thrashed Sandy I would have certainly thrashed him," but Petigru admitted, upon reflection, that in earlier years he too "had been in the habit of promptly correcting the freedom of impertinence."<sup>20</sup>

Though Petigru treated his slaves with consideration and affection, he was not inhibited about getting rid of intractable slaves, whether his own or his clients'. Petigru justified the sale of a runaway named Sampson with the hope that he would do better in Louisiana since he was "perfectly incorrigible here." Similarly, he hoped that Miss Webb's slave,



Rachel, who had been in "concealment" in Charleston, would as the result of a sale to someone in New Orleans "keep better company and be wiser as well as happier than she has been before." He sold "light-fingered" Nat to a factory owner in North Carolina in the expectation that his removal from "bad and idle company" and from "access to money and play" would correct the propensity to theft.<sup>21</sup>

Angelina Grimké Weld, the Charleston expatriate convert to abolitionism, once testified that slaveholders regarded "their slaves as property, the mere instruments of their convenience and pleasure. "One who is a slaveholder at heart," she said, "never recognizes a human being in a slave."<sup>22</sup> Petigru might have been paternalistic and sometimes demanding of his slaves, but he was not "a slaveholder at heart." He was several times persuaded to buy or sell a slave because of the slave's desires rather than his own. He was, for example, much averse to purchasing a woman who had five children as an aid to his chronically invalid wife. The price, he lamented, was "like money thrown away, for an increase in servants is only an increase of expense," but his wife's "perseverance and the poor woman's anxiety" carried the day. Once she got into the house, Petigru confessed, he had no heart to turn her away.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, another slave, Maria, came to him to express her gratitude for being sold to a free Negro who was willing to allow her to work off her freedom.<sup>24</sup>

Slaves could be a heavy burden. Through a bequest in a wealthy client's will, Petigru had become the owner of a number of slaves. Because the former owner had given these slaves a free rein, Petigru had required no services from them and had even given two of them their freedom. He was delighted when Miss Emma Starr offered to take over the responsibility of two of those remaining, Rina and her son, Jim. Jim's mind was so feeble that he was unable to take care of himself, and Petigru admitted he had just about decided not to trouble himself any more with Jim. Petigru was doubly grateful when Miss Starr offered to give them freedom and to make a provision in her will for Rina. "The Scripture tells us that we shall have the poor with us always," he told his friend, "and there is no exception in favor of free negroes."<sup>25</sup>

Once on a trip home from Georgia Petigru "felt very much like fighting" when he encountered thirty slaves who had been



seized by the sheriff for an "unjust demand." After "at least for the present staying the ravages of the harpies of the law," he was prevented from paying a much desired visit to "Badwell" because of two slaves he was escorting to Charleston "who added sensibly to the burden of the journey."<sup>26</sup>

As an attorney with an extensive estate practice Petigru was constantly concerned with matters involving slaves. The office correspondence of Petigru and King during the last nine years of Petigru's life reveals that the law firm was engaged in almost every conceivable transaction concerning slaves. There were, for example, claims for injury to a slave hired out to the Mount Pleasant Ferry Company, for breach of warranty in the sale of a slave with an injured knee and for recovery of a slave sold by an unauthorized person; proceedings for partition of the slaves in an estate and for foreclosure of a mortgage of Negroes; questions of the validity of a city tax on Negroes brought from abroad for sale and the interpretation of bequests in wills; problems of creditors' rights; the preparation of contracts and mortgages and the making of inventories and appraisals.<sup>27</sup>

The references to slaves in the letters and legal opinions of Mr. Petigru often convey to modern ears an impression of insensitivity, but we must judge him in the context of his environment and not ours. For example, at the time of a supposed Negro insurrection in the Georgetown area in 1829, he wrote to General Joseph W. Allston, "I am afraid you will hang half the country. You must take care and save negroes enough for the Rice Crop."<sup>28</sup> His opinion about the disposition of certain Negroes as being derived from "the original stock purchase" seems slightly cold-blooded.<sup>29</sup>

The following remark also grates on our sensibilities. In a letter to a Georgia friend Petigru hoped he had got a good price for his "mancipiary property" and inquired, "What do you think of that neology for niggers?"<sup>30</sup> Should we castigate Petigru for lack of sympathy for the poor slave left in the Work House because nobody wanted him? He was, Petigru said, what they call a "scrub."<sup>31</sup>

In Petigru's correspondence we learn about a slave named Thomas, who was placed in the Work House because he became



sick immediately after his purchase. The Work House physician advised Petigru that the man had the dropsy and no hope of recovery, but that he should get a proper diet which the Work House did not provide. Petigru found that there was nowhere else to send him, since Roper Hospital would not accept Blacks. The most important concern, however, did not seem to be the unfortunate being's survival but the question of the seller's responsibility for defective merchandise.<sup>32</sup>

Petigru, nevertheless, responded to human need, without regard for condition or color, when he saw a way to respond effectively. He had a temper which he usually controlled but which flared up when he was confronted by a sudden injustice. Once Petigru intervened after a German "guardsman," had arrested a passing Black on the ground that his pass was invalid. Petigru insisted the pass was correct, but during the argument the Negro fled. The guardsman then tried to arrest Petigru, and Petigru knocked him down. Ignoring two summonses, Petigru reportedly answered the third by sending word to the mayor "to go to hell and teach his Dutch myrmidons to speak English and not molest law-abiding citizens on their way home."<sup>33</sup>

On another occasion, as Petigru was heading home from the office, he discovered a guardsman dragging a sobbing female slave off to the guard house because she had no pass. The woman explained that her mistress was ill, and she was returning from the doctor's shop with a bottle of medicine. Petigru was convinced she was telling the truth, and when the man refused to let her go, Petigru knocked him down. This time the distinguished attorney got a trip to the guard house and had to pay a fine.<sup>34</sup>

Petigru had a generally low tolerance for the harassment of petty officialdom, as an indignant letter to a member of the patrol who had gone uninvited to a female client's plantation at an "unreasonable hour with threatening and quarrelsome speeches" indicated. Petigru warned that the man could not come on the plantation without a patrol warrant and then only "to search disorderly houses or houses suspected of harboring runaway negroes." His conduct, Petigru reminded him, was not only injurious to an "undefended woman" but destructive to "wholesome discipline" on a plantation.<sup>35</sup>



The movement to evangelize the slave population in Charleston, which had begun in the 1820's, culminated in 1849 with the building of Calvary Episcopal Church for Negroes, an accomplishment in which Henry D. Lesesne, Petigru's brother-in-law and then law partner, played an important role. Following an insurrection by Blacks at the Work House, a mob of perhaps 1200 whites gathered to destroy the nearly completed "nigger" church, which many saw as a potential breeding ground for sedition. Petigru helped turn back the mob and thereafter was a leading figure in saving Calvary Church. In one of his speeches Petigru declared: "The liberty of teaching what was true and good to all men, why, sirs, that was what brought many of our fathers here."<sup>36</sup>

"To educate is to civilize," Petigru was to proclaim. The purpose of making education universal was "to raise the people in the scale of being." The law of South Carolina prohibited the education of Negroes, but Petigru believed that the teachings of Christianity were more important than any secular training.<sup>37</sup>

Petigru again and again did battle in behalf of free persons of color. He defended those unjustly accused of crime; he struggled against the detention of British sailors under the infamous Negro Seamen Acts; his firm asserted the claims of a mulatto woman against her white lover; he fought for the property rights of free blacks denoted as "alien enemies" of the Confederate States; he was willing to defy the law when he felt honor-bound to carry out a trust for a free Negro woman in violation of a statute declaring all trusts for Negroes void.<sup>38</sup>

In various ways Petigru was often able to engineer for his clients the emancipation of slaves, an increasingly difficult task in South Carolina. He several times expended time and effort in charity cases to secure or preserve the freedom of the mulatto offspring of white men. One such battle began in 1837 and continued to 1860, necessitating numerous appearances in court, the securing of a special act of the Legislature and laborious negotiations.<sup>39</sup>

Petigru prized freedom. In his argument before the Confederate Court in the sequestration case in 1861, Petigru refused to disclose his knowledge of the property of clients resident in the North with this ringing declaration:



"As St. Paul says, 'I was born free and will not forfeit that freedom which I inherit from my free mother. I will not submit to be commanded where there is no right to command.' "40

Perhaps we can better understand Petigru by understanding Paul, for both were proponents of freedom in a world of slavery. Paul recognized Onesimus, the slave, as brother and urged the slave to take freedom when he had the chance, but he nonetheless counselled the slave to obey the master and the ruled to obey the ruler.<sup>41</sup> Petigru's attitude and conduct, I believe, consciously reflected the counsel of the apostle.

Joseph Daniel Pope, one of Petigru's former law students, recalled that his mentor "hated slavery...as an institution. He hated human bondage as the antithesis of human liberty."<sup>42</sup> Petigru's grandson remembered that Petigru considered slavery "a great social and political wrong."<sup>43</sup>

Petigru rejected John C. Calhoun's "miserable homilies on the advantages of slavery."<sup>44</sup> According to the recollection of Francis Lieber, one-time professor at the University of South Carolina, Petigru once exclaimed that those who considered slavery a divine institution were like those who "worshipped God and Satan at one and the same time."<sup>45</sup>

In 1856 Petigru's close friend, William J. Grayson, dedicated a book of poems to Petigru as the "defender of the unfortunate." The title poem was the "Hireling and the Slave," in which Grayson pictured Negroes as lazy and improvident creatures who could function only under slavery, "the negro system of labor." Slavery gave the slave religion; free labor led to strikes.<sup>46</sup>

Surely Petigru could not have swallowed all of Grayson's over-blown romanticisms. Yet neither would Petigru have rejected all of Grayson's contentions, for Joseph Daniel Pope has claimed that he heard Petigru say that the happiest lot for a Negro in this country "was to belong to some humane master whose interest it was to protect him as property, and thus secure for him those few rights which the law allowed him."<sup>47</sup> Petigru's grandson has explained that though Petigru considered slavery a wrong to humanity, he did not think it "a wrong inflicted by himself on 'Sandy' or 'Nancy.'" <sup>48</sup>



Petigru did not hate the humane slave owner. He was one himself. He was also one of those all too rare individuals who could hate the sin without hating the sinner. This is one reason why his opponents remained his friends.

Petigru most likely endorsed the principal argument advanced by his cousin and law partner, James Johnston Pettigrew, in his brilliant minority report to the South Carolina legislature opposing the reopening of the African slave trade in 1857. Johnston Pettigrew argued that the slave system had been to an extent civilized and that the introduction of "slovenly barbarians" from Africa would corrupt the "industrious" native-born slaves. The elder Petigru also certainly approved the younger's assertion that it would be a worse evil to make "slaves out of free men" than "to purchase men already slaves."<sup>49</sup>

Petigru did not believe that slavery was a permanent or natural condition. After the firing on the Star of the West in January, 1861, Petigru predicted: "I never believed slavery would last a hundred years; now I know that it will not last five."<sup>50</sup>

In a letter several years earlier Petigru had argued that a disruption of the Union would not protect the system of slavery. Slaveholders' rights were protected with unanimity, he said in effect, only because it is a matter of rights between the South and the North, between us and them, but, after a separation, the interests of the non-slaveholder are bound to clash with the interests of the slave owner.<sup>51</sup>

Since Petigru was certain that slavery would sooner or later disappear where it already existed, he was in favor of limiting its spread into other areas. He was most assuredly a free-soiler. "I am sorry you had to vote for the Kansas-Nebraska Bill," he wrote in 1854 to a Congressman, "but being a democrat you could not help it." Opening up free territory to popular sovereignty had "ripped" the Whig Party and endangered the country. The violation of the Missouri Compromise, he continued, was "the worst thing that has been done in twenty years."<sup>52</sup>

Though not an apologist for slavery, Petigru was never an abolitionist. He could truthfully say, "I have never given



the least encouragement to any doubts concerning the propriety and necessity of maintaining the relations that exist between the two races bond and free by whom the soil is inhabited." As violent talk begot violent talk, Petigru felt that great allowances had to be made "for violence of language on our side to meet the violence in the which out material and social interests are assailed from without."<sup>53</sup>

Petigru did not care to be linked to the abolitionist camp. The preservation of the Union was to him always more important than the ending of slavery. In a case in which Petigru represented a Northerner accused of being an abolitionist, the opposing attorney attacked both lawyer and client as abolitionists. Petigru responded with a "grand burst of indignant eloquence" that crashed "like the blast of a bugle."<sup>54</sup>

Petigru did not possess an abolitionist temperament. He was a conservative, declared R. Barnwell Rhett. He hated the dogmas of the "Red Republicans of France," "who by denying the weakness of our fallen nature, would set man against his fellow man, in vain efforts for abstract justice and equality and vain-er efforts for human perfectability."<sup>55</sup>

Abolitionists were not tolerated in South Carolina, and Petigru knew that anyone who was an abolitionist "must go elsewhere to enact the part."<sup>56</sup> In 1832 he had written to Hugh S. Legaré: "If the Union is severed my mind is made up to quit this negro country. But where to go?--aye, there's the rub."<sup>57</sup> After the Civil War began, however, Petigru no longer entertained such thoughts. The land of his birth had claims above all other. South Carolina was his home, and as he wrote his eldest daughter, who did desert her state, "the thought of my emigration is foreign from all that is practicable."<sup>58</sup>

Petigru tried to "look down with an equal eye upon the various tribes of men and their prejudices."<sup>59</sup> He was neither a defender of slavery nor a proponent of abolition. Slavery was, he believed, a condition which he was powerless to change. As Petigru confided to Daniel Webster in 1850, he had already become a spectator of the political scene in South Carolina without power or influence "to stem the torrents of popular delusion."<sup>60</sup>



Southerners, in any event, had long been chained to their "peculiar institution." Thomas Jefferson had set forth the dilemma which confronted lovers of freedom in the South: "We have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go."<sup>61</sup>

"The law about negroes is laid down with great rigor in the distempered state of the public mind," Petigru once declared. Slavery interfered with the comfort not only of "the poor nigs but the poor buckra too" and indeed with that of the rest of society as well. "The master," he exclaimed, was "in a situation like that of the jailer, whose confinement is almost as severe as that of his prisoner."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Blyth Allston, "Life and Times of James L. Petigru," Charleston Sunday News, January 21, 1900.

<sup>2</sup>Petigru to Jane Petigru North, December 24, 1835, James Petigru Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru: The Union Man of South Carolina (Washington, D.C.: W.H. Loudermilk & Co., 1920), p. 180.

<sup>3</sup>8th U.S. Census, 1840, City of Charleston, Ward 2, population schedules. The census gives the total in the household as 50 but actually lists only six whites and 38 slaves.

<sup>4</sup>Allston, Sunday News; Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 352, Elizabeth W. Allston Pringle, Chronicles of Chicora Wood (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), pp. 53-55. Mrs. Pringle confuses Tom and Prince and states that they and "Mauma Maria" were offered freedom in Petigru's mother's will.

<sup>5</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, October 26, 1843, and September 24, 1851, Allston, Sunday News.

<sup>6</sup>Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 352.

<sup>7</sup>Michael P. Johnson, "Planters and Patriarchy: Charleston, 1800-1860," The Journal of Southern History, XLVI (February 1980), pp. 45-72.



<sup>8</sup>Edward G. Mason, "A Visit to South Carolina in 1860," Atlantic Monthly (February, 1884), p. 242.

<sup>9</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, January 29, 1862, Allston, Sunday News, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 431.

<sup>10</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, December 15, 1862, Allston, Sunday News.

<sup>11</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, February 27, 1861, Petigru papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>12</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, June 16, 1856, Allston, Sunday News.

<sup>13</sup>In a letter to Grayson in 1860. William J. Grayson, James Louis Petigru, A Biographical Sketch (New York: Harper & Bros., 1866), pp. 164-165.

<sup>14</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, February 7, 1849, Allston, Sunday News.

<sup>15</sup>Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, pp. 353-354.

<sup>16</sup>Jane P. North to Petigru, October 27, 1862, Pettigrew papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

<sup>17</sup>Petigru to Susan P. Webb, July 5, 1856, Petigru and King letterbooks, Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

<sup>18</sup>Petigru to J.P. Devereaux, July 18, 1853, Petigru papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>19</sup>Petigru to Susan Webb, November 10, 1860, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>20</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, June 28, 1862, Allston, Sunday News, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 454.

<sup>21</sup>Petigru to Susan Webb, July 2, 1857, Petigru and King letterbooks; Petigru to William Elliott, January 17, 1843, Petigru papers, South Carolina Historical Society; Petigru to Susan Webb, October 27, 1843, Petigru papers, Library of



Congress; Petigru to Louis Covin, Mount Carmel, N.C., May 9, 1862, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>22</sup>American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses (New York: The American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), p. 57.

<sup>23</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, April 22, 1851, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, pp. 287-288.

<sup>24</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, June 13, 1832, copy by James Carson, Petigru papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>25</sup>Petigru to Emma Starr, April 23 and 25, 1861, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>26</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, January 6, 1843, Allston, Sunday News.

<sup>27</sup>Petigru and King letterbooks, 1854-1863.

<sup>28</sup>Petigru to Allston, September 19, 1829, Courtenay collection, Charleston Library Society.

<sup>29</sup>Petigru to J. Echols, Columbus, Georgia, June 26, 1860, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>30</sup>Petigru to R.H. Wilde, Augusta, Georgia, January 4, 1843, Petigru papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>31</sup>Petigru to Mrs. McPherson Laurens, March 21, 1861, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>32</sup>Petigru to G.V. Anker, May 2, 1862, to W. Withers, Charleston Work House, May 2, 1862, to H.W. Thompson, Williston, S.C.,-- May, 1861, to Dr. William C. Ravenel, May 12, 1862, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>33</sup>Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 353. This story is attributed to James R. Pringle, Jr.

<sup>34</sup>Joseph Daniel Pope, "James Louis Petigru," Great American Lawyers, William Draper Lewis (ed.), IV (Philadelphia, Pa.:



John C. Winston Co., 1908), pp. 63-66. Pope was a law student of Petigru's at the time and was later Dean of the Law Department of the University of South Carolina.

<sup>35</sup>Petigru to Wm. Johnson, May 5, 1854, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>36</sup>Robert F. Durden, "The Establishment of Calvary Protestant Episcopal Church for Negroes in Charleston," South Carolina Historical Magazine, LXV (April, 1864), pp. 63-84; Charleston Courier, July 24, 1849.

<sup>37</sup>Centennial Celebration of the South Carolina College, Consisting of the Baccalaureate Address by the President of the College, the Semi-Centennial Oration of the Hon. James L. Petigru and Answers to Letters of Invitation (Charleston: Walker & Evans, 1855), p. 14; South Carolina Acts of Assembly VII, 1834, p. 468; Oration before the Thalian and Phi Delta Societies at Oglethorpe University on Commencement Day, the 10th of November, 1841, by James Louis Petigru, L.L.D. (Milledgeville, Ga.: Grieve & Orne, 1841), pp. 10-12; James L. Petigru, An Address Delivered before the Philomathean and Euphemian Literary Societies of Erskine College, at the Annual Commencement, August 13, 1856 (Columbia: Edward H. Britton, 1856), pp. 13-17.

<sup>38</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, November 13, 22, 1862, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, pp. 460-461; Philip M. Hamer, "Great Britain, the United States and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1850-1860," The Journal of Southern History, I (February 1935), pp. 3-28 and (May, 1935), pp. 138-168; Alan Frank, "The First Nullification: The Negro Seamen Acts Controversy in South Carolina, 1822-1860," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1976; Petigru and King to Jno. C. Simmons, August 9, 1857, Petigru and King letterbooks; Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 401; Petigru to G.M. Coffin, February 4 and March 6, 1862, and to Frances Moore, Greenville, February 4, 1862, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>39</sup>Family of George Broad. State vs. Singletary, Dudley's Law Reports (1838) pp. 220-233; Rhame vs. Ferguson et al., Rice's Law Reports (1839), pp. 196-203; Ford vs. Ferguson et al., 8 Richardson's Equity Reports (1856), pp. 95-201; Statutes at Large of South Carolina, XII (1855), p. 416. See also Wigg vs. Simonton, 12 Richardson's Law Reports (1860), pp. 583-594.



<sup>40</sup>Charleston Daily Courier, October 22, 1861.

<sup>41</sup>Philemon 16; I Corinthians 7:21; Ephesians 6:5; Titus 3:1.

<sup>42</sup>Pope, "James Louis Petigru," p. 43.

<sup>43</sup>Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 347.

<sup>44</sup>Petigru to Capt. Thomas Petigru, USN (his brother), December 16, 1844, Allston, Sunday News.

<sup>45</sup>Francis Lieber to Edward Everett, October 22, 1863, typed copy, James Hamilton papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC, handwritten copy, Lieber papers, Huntington Library.

<sup>46</sup>William J. Grayson, The Hireling and the Slave, Chicora, and Other Poems (Charleston: McCarter and Co., 1856), pp. vii, 31, 45.

<sup>47</sup>Pope, "James Louis Petigru," p. 43.

<sup>48</sup>Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 347.

<sup>49</sup>Report to the Minority of the Special Committee of Seven to Whom was Referred so Much of Governor Adams' Message, No. 1 as Relates to Slavery and the Slave Trade (Columbia: Carolina Times, 1857).

<sup>50</sup>Pope, "James Louis Petigru," p. 44.

<sup>51</sup>Petigru to Francis Lieber, February 11, 1857, Lieber papers, Huntington Library.

<sup>52</sup>Petigru to J.J. Evans, Washington, D.C., June 27, 1854, Petigru and King letterbooks.

<sup>53</sup>Petigru to Francis Lieber, February 11, 1857, Lieber papers, Huntington Library.

<sup>54</sup>Smalle vs. Farmer et al., clippings file, Pettigrew papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History; Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 350, correspondence, Petigru and King letterbooks.



<sup>55</sup>Memorial of the Late James L. Petigru: Proceedings of the Bar of Charleston, S.C., March 25, 1863 (New York: Richardson & Co., 1866), pp. 18, 24.

<sup>56</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, July 10, 1837, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 190.

<sup>57</sup>Petigru to Hugh S. Legaré, October 29, 1832, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 104.

<sup>58</sup>Petigru to Carolina P. Carson, January 18, 1862, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 429.

<sup>59</sup>Petigru to James Johnston Pettigrew, October 21, 1862, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 459.

<sup>60</sup>Petigru to Webster, December 6, 1850, Daniel Webster papers on microfilm, Library of Congress.

<sup>61</sup>Quoted in Jesse T. Carpenter, The South as a Conscious Minority, 1789-1861 (New York: New York University Press, 1930), p. 16.

<sup>62</sup>Petigru to Jane P. North, October 29, 1860, Carson, Life, Letters and Speeches, p. 360.



## Commentaries On "The Distinctive Carolinian"

### A. Marvin L. Cann - Lander College

Dr. Slaunwhite's summary of Nathaniel Dial's business and political career over a span of forty years might have been strengthened by a different focus. The paper gives greatest attention to Dial's often frustrated political ambitions. If his importance is found, as the author asserts, in "outstanding contributions to the economic development of his state," greater attention should have been given to Dial's banking operations, his acquisition of property, and his role in the creation of the Ware Shoals Manufacturing and Power Company.

The author might have examined, for example, Dial's role in the 1906 take-over of the Ware Shoals Company by New Jersey investors, including Benjamin Riegel.

The paper could have been a more interpretive study of N.B. Dial had the author examined representative articles and monographs on the progressive tradition after 1920.

The framework for an interpretation of Dial's career might have been set by Arthur S. Link's "What Happened to the Progressive Movement in the Twenties?" and George Brown Tindall's "Business Progressivism: Southern Politics in the Twenties."

Tindall argues that "continuities of progressivism may be traced into the twenties." The vital progressive themes of the twenties, according to Tindall, were efficiency and economy in government and a concern for improved public services. These were principles which Nathaniel Dial embraced.

Tindall described the Southern business-progressives of the decade as:

a relatively colorless group on the whole, respectable and circumspect in demeanor, conservatively "constructive" in their approach to public problems, storming no citadels of entrenched "privilege" but carrying forward the new public functions that had gained acceptance....



This seems an appropriate description of the public life of N.B. Dial.

Dr. Slaunwhite has provided a useful political profile of Nathaniel Dial, a man whose public career was overshadowed by his charismatic contemporaries--Ben Tillman, John Patrick Grace, and Cole Blease.

B. Joe P. Dunn - Converse College

When I received the titles of the two papers (but not yet the manuscripts) a few months ago, I asked, "Who are James Louis Petigru and Nathaniel B. Dial?" Looking them up, I found one to be an antebellum Charleston lawyer of some distinction, a Unionist during the Nullification Crises in 1832-33, and the other, an obscure one-term Senator of little political note. "Why are these men distinctive Carolinians," I asked, "and of what interest could they be?" Today, I have a better perspective on that question.

Although of quite different eras (Dial was born in 1862, less than a year before Petigru died), the two men have much in common. Both were men of good family, local prominence, and means--the latter in each case the product of inheritance and adept business abilities. Both were conservatives, by background, station, and temperament; each had a sense of *noblesse-oblige*. Neither were reformers in any conventional political sense; but both were progressive men, advocates, if not crusaders, of change. Both were political men, but each disdained politicians and petty bureaucrats. They were each men of their eras, caught in the problems and limitations of the times, attuned to wrongs and ill practices, but equally bound by a restraint of manner, style, and decorum which inhibited their ability to act. Both dealt with the problems of race and knew that Blacks were treated wrongly, but each was too bound by his own racial stereotypes to become a leader of a campaign for justice; however, as individuals, each acted humanely.

They were not "movers and shakers," the kind who make the pages of history texts; but they were the kind who make history. They were distinctive men, but in more ways they were representative men--each of his time, its limitations, and its problems. Men such as James Louis Petigru and



Nathaniel Barksdale Dial are the stuff of grassroots history. In their lives we get beyond the national movements which dominate an age to the effect of movements, institutions, and change on individuals. In Petigru we see a man, representative of other men of the time, struggling with the ambiguities, the inconsistencies, the contradictions of the practice of slavery. In Dial we witness in sharper focus the economic growth of the new South and the successes, failures, and reaction to populism and progressivism in South Carolina.

### Petigru

My prejudices against the South for its historical race relations were formed early. My views on slavery, reconstruction, and the segregation era were formed by Kenneth Stamp, John Hope Franklin, C. Vann Woodward, and August Meier, long before I came south of the Mason-Dixon line. Television and the press in the early and mid-sixties molded my conception of segregation and the Southern social-political order. My perceptions were not necessarily wrong; they were merely simplistic. The syllogism ran something like this: slavery and segregation were universally accepted in the South, both practices were brutal without possibility of defense, both stemmed from purest racism; therefore, all slaveholders and segregationists were immoral.

Recent literature, and my increased intellectual maturity, revealed the banality of my former position. All opposition to the civil rights campaigns was not racist inspired, and Southerners' views on segregation were far more mixed than many cared to admit. The same ambiguity existed earlier on slavery. In the last decade, possibly no area of historiography has been more productive than that on slavery. For all their ills, the cliometricians have made their contribution by verifying the diversity and complexity of the slavery question. A simple, monolithic conception of slavery and the Southern plantation system is no longer viable. Hundreds of different practices and patterns existed. In many ways, the Petigru's were more common than heretical.

Professor Tyler has woven an intricate story of one man's relationship with the peculiar institution. It is good grassroots history. Along with the hundreds of similar vignettes emerging in articles and Ph.D. dissertations, this is the material from which larger syntheses and more precise inter-



pretations arise. I wish that Professor Tyler had attempted to put his study into larger focus. Petigru may not have been typical, but he was not alone in his approach to slavery; there were many other Southern slaveholders like him. Alone, James Louis Petigru may be of some fleeting interest; as representatives of one type of Southern slaveholder, he gains much greater significance.

### Dial

Let me start with Dr. Slaunwhite's paper where I ended with Professor Tyler's. Why should one bother one's self with a one-term Senator (and three-time loser) who was by the author's admission politically inastute, a mediocre legislator, and by every criteria a political failure. I cannot speak for Dr. Slaunwhite, but my justification would be an interest in grass-roots history, the building blocks of larger interpretation. Dr. Slaunwhite has chosen to resurrect a relatively obscure figure, and he has provided us with a sound piece of research in summarizing the man's life and work. We learn that Dial was an important figure in Laurens, South Carolina: a lawyer, three-time mayor (the youngest ever elected to the office at the time), founder of two banks, a cotton mill, a brick company, a canning company, a bonded warehouse, a power plant, and a manufacturing company. This should guarantee his eternal standing in the history of Laurens County. He was an outstanding representative of that group of men of his generation who lay the foundations of the New South, and provided the early base for this state's economic prosperity today. This is indeed justification for an inquiry into his life; and the author states that this is his reason. But only one-third of his paper addresses this subject; the bulk, the other two-thirds, is devoted to Dial's political career.

Here Dr. Slaunwhite fails to establish why we should continue to be interested in Nathaniel B. Dial. He seems to tell us the story of Dial's political career because it happened, not because it had larger meaning. His paper lacks the purpose and sharper focus of an article. It reads more like a distillation of a Ph.D. dissertation which I suspect that it is. I would suggest that Dial's political career be approached in a contest, possibly as a case study of progressive era politics in South Carolina. This was the time of two of South Carolina's most notorious politicians: Ben Tillman and Cole Blease, two demagogues who dominated the era. Were they



progressives? Did South Carolina have a progressive movement and, if so, how did it compare or contrast with progressivism in other states? How did the progressives differ from the conservatives? What was the nature of reform in South Carolina during this period? Dial's campaign in 1912, the Byzantine election of 1918, and his unhappy Senate tenure possibly could be approached in this context. In many ways, Dial was the William Howard Taft of South Carolina, a man of distinction out of place in his times. But these are only suggestions.

The important point remains that if Dial deserves a biography, and I believe that he might, then Dr. Slaunwhite should be encouraged to expand upon the research exhibited here. But if he merely proposes an article, then it should have sharper focus and larger purpose.

#### Conclusion

Both authors should be commended for their sound research; they have written papers with potential significance. Dr. Slaunwhite takes a broad survey approach; Professor Tyler, a more narrow orientation. Each should be encouraged to see his work in its larger context and to pursue his study to larger objectives.



## SOUTH CAROLINA'S FIRST NEGRO SEAMEN ACTS, 1793-1803

George D. Terry

On October 8, 1793, the citizens of Charleston assembled in front of the Exchange for what was described as urgent business. Extralegal town meetings such as this had been part of the city's political culture since the 1760's and were similar to the regular town meetings of New England. In Charleston, however, town meetings were established as an alternative to mob violence. The institution was successful in large part because it extended active political participation to all levels of society.

Beginning with the meeting in October 1793, members of this informal institution began formulating a series of extralegal measures restricting the entrance of free blacks into the state. These measures, never enacted into law, were remarkably similar to those passed by the General Assembly in 1822. Commonly known as the Negro Seamen Acts, they were adopted in the aftermath of the Denmark Vesey insurrection scare which occurred earlier that year.<sup>1</sup> These laws required all free Negroes arriving on vessels entering the port of Charleston to be placed in jail and kept there until their vessel departed. If the free Negro or his ship's captain did not pay the cost of imprisoning him, the free Negro could be sold into slavery. Previously scholars have linked these laws directly to what they see as the state's irrational response to the Denmark Vesey affair.<sup>2</sup> The Vesey affair was a turning point in South Carolina's history, according to John Lofton because the state "acquired a persecution complex and became combative." The Negro Seamen Acts of 1822 are cited as a prime example of the state "employing ill-adapted political weapons to defend an obsolescent economic order."<sup>3</sup> Until recently the measures adopted by the Charleston town meeting thirty years earlier have escaped the attention of most historians. That they did previously exist, however, casts doubt upon the conclusions that the Negro Seamen Acts of 1822 were irrational and ill-adapted.

These first measures originated during the early 1790's as a reaction to the political and social upheaval occurring in France and its West Indian colony, Santo Domingo.<sup>4</sup> Initially, citizens of the state did not perceive the slave



insurrections taking place in the colony as being connected with the doctrines of liberty and equality put forth by the revolutionaries in France. The earliest stages of the French Revolution were greeted throughout the state with the greatest enthusiasm imaginable. Charleston was one of the most pro-French cities in the country at that time, a fact which prompted the French Republic to have Genêt arrive in that city in order to insure his warm welcome to the United States. There are other indications of the depths of South Carolina's support of the Revolution such as the creation of a number of Democratic societies and state sponsored celebrations honoring France. Favorable court decisions were handed down by federal judge Thomas Bee which made Charleston the center center of French privateering in the country until 1796. This support for the Revolution was not limited to the lower orders of society. Until 1793 such prominent figures as William Moultrie, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and even Robert Goodloe Harper participated in demonstrations supporting the Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

In 1793, however, South Carolinians began to perceive that the slave insurrections occurring in Santo Domingo were caused by the events in France. The event which concerned South Carolinians most was the French National Assembly's decision to give free persons of color in its colonies equal political rights and its serious consideration of emancipation for all slaves. One Charlestonian identifying himself only as "A Friend of France" wrote a long letter to the Columbian Herald praising France, and citing the Revolution as the greatest event to occur in the history of mankind. But, this writer went on, in certain areas the French had gone too far. He wrote, "My judgment has paused at some and my feelings have revolted at some of those decrees, measures, and actions (particularly with regard to the West India Islands) which the most cruel necessity or the most ardent and blind enthusiasm must have imposed on a nation so many acknowledge humane and polished." Another correspondent warned the people of South Carolina five weeks later to "recollect the fate of St. Domingo--I need not speak plainer; be prudent--be grateful to France, but remember that self preservation is the first law of nature."<sup>6</sup>

The main reason people began thinking more about the events in Santo Domingo, was the fall of the colony's capital



Cape Francoise, and the final destruction of plantation slavery on the island.<sup>7</sup> Between July and November of 1793 hundreds, perhaps thousands, of French refugees from the island fled into Charleston. That summer William Read wrote to his brother Jacob, that "the frequent arrivals of the miserable fugitives from St. Domingo excites charity and sympathetic pity from all orders."<sup>8</sup> Accompanying these refugees were some of their slaves and free Negroes who had been exposed to the French revolutionary doctrine of universal equality. To many, the implications of this flow of blacks into the state was clear. "From the moment we admitted the St. Domingo Negroes into our country," one Charleston resident observed, "security from that source became daily more precarious."<sup>9</sup>

The arrival of these pitiful planters who had lost everything must have been alarming in itself. But, in addition, at the height of this influx of refugees, Governor William Moultrie received a warning from the state of Virginia; evidence had been discovered that a general insurrection was planned among the slaves of both Virginia and South Carolina. The insurrection was to occur on October 13, 1793; and according to one account from Richmond, the slaves living in Charleston were to be "furnished by a person from the West Indies with the Arms Ammunition, that they are to set fire first to the houses and take advantage while its raging-- They say the Negroes of Cape Francois have obtained their liberty by this method and they will proceed in the same manner." Reports from persons living in Charleston indicates that whites in the city believed that as many as 15,000 blacks were involved in the plot.<sup>10</sup>

In response to these rumors the militia was put on alert and fortifications were built around the state powder magazine. Although they supported the government's actions, many people in Charleston felt stronger measures were needed to insure their safety. For example, in early September a large group of whites broke into the home of a free Negro butcher, Peter Mathews, for a cache of arms. The crowd's action indicates a widespread belief that the supposed plot not only included slaves and Frenchmen, but free Negroes as well.<sup>11</sup> More important, the action against Mathews also reveals the conviction among many that the threat of a widespread insurrection was so great that governmental action was not suf-



ficient to insure the safety of the white population.<sup>12</sup> As the date of the supposed slave rebellion approached, this belief grew stronger.

Blacks from Santo Domingo continued to enter the city and finally a meeting of all the citizens was called on October 8, 1793.<sup>13</sup> The incident which prompted it was the arrival of two more ships of refugees including slaves and free Negroes. The citizens of Charleston first ordered the ships to anchor under the guns of Fort Johnson. After appointing a committee "to attend to the observation and enforcement of all their resolutions," they resolved to ask the Governor to take immediate measures to remove the ships from the state entirely. No passengers could enter the city "except such persons as on full examination, may in the opinion of the committee, be admitted without any danger to the community." A second resolution stated "that any vessel that may arrive from Santo Domingo with passengers, negroes or people of colour, shall remain under the guns of Ft. Johnson till such passengers as the committee may deem improper to admit, and the negroes and people of colour be sent out of the state; and that such passengers whom the committee shall think improper to admit and the negroes and people of color be on no account, suffered to land in any part of the state." The citizens then resolved to have the General Assembly require all free Negroes who had arrived from Santo Domingo within the past year to leave the state. A request was also made to the captain of the revenue cutter in the harbor to assist the citizens in carrying out their resolutions. Ironically, among the members of the committee appointed to insure the enforcement of these resolutions was Joseph Vesey whose slave, Denmark, was to instigate the event which prompted the General Assembly to formally enact these measures into law in 1822.<sup>14</sup>

The citizens' meeting was quite effective. The French consul complained that the actions taken by the citizens had forced those on board the two ships to remain "secluded at great expense to the Republic on an island set aside for quarantine." A week after the meeting, Governor William Moultrie issued a proclamation which ordered "all free negroes and persons of color, who have arrived within twelve months from any other place, to depart from this place within TEN DAYS." He added that "all and every person and persons of



any of the above descriptions, who may be found in this state after the expiration of the time herein limited shall be apprehended and closely confined until they are sent out of the state."<sup>15</sup> An indication that the order was carried out was that the Charleston city council spent money several times throughout 1793, 1794, and 1795 to cover expenses for the "passage of French Negroes" and for "confining French Negroes." Later in 1796 the General Assembly reimbursed the city for these expenses.<sup>16</sup>

In November 1793 the Grand Jury of Beaufort District expressed its "warm approbation of the resolutions of our fellow citizens in the city of Charleston, of the 8th day of October last, and particularly those which relate to the free negroes and people of colour brought into this state from St. Domingo and other parts of the world." The Grand Jury went on to state its willingness to cooperate with the people of Charleston in carrying the resolutions into effect. It requested that a copy of the resolutions of Charleston's meeting "be laid before the legislature to make such immediate and decisive regulation, conformably to the principles of the said resolutions."<sup>17</sup> The action taken by the Beaufort Grand Jury indicates that racial tensions and anxiety existed not only in Charleston but in all the lowcountry districts. The fear of an insurrection occurring in this area was intensified by the fact that over 70% of the population were either slaves or free Negroes. No other place in the United States had such a high percentage of Negroes in 1790.<sup>18</sup>

In June 1794 another meeting of all the citizens of Charleston was called. Nathaniel Russell described the meeting's purpose to Ralph Izard as being an attempt to enact some effective measures "to prevent any evil consequences from that diabolical decree of the national convention which emancipates all the slaves in the French colonies, a circumstance the most alarming that could happen to this country."<sup>19</sup> The meeting was called by the committee which had been appointed in October 1793 to enforce the resolutions against the entrance of any free Negroes from Santo Domingo. The committee needed to inform the other citizens of "some recent facts that have come to their knowledge." They stated in their report to the citizens that "it is inconsistent with the welfare of this state to suffer negroes or any people of colour, whether free or slaves, to come to be brought into this state on any



pretense whatsoever." The report went on to assert "that it is absolutely necessary that speedy and effectual means should be used to send from this country the foreign Negro and people of colour, whose going at large the committee considers prejudicial to the interests of this state." Not only did the committee desire the General Assembly to ban the entrance of all slaves and free Negroes into the state, they wanted it to construct a system which would insure that such a policy was carried out. Therefore they resolved "that his excellency the governor be respectfully and earnestly requested to order the commander of Fort Johnson to require a declaration on oath from all captains calling at Fort Johnson to make a return of all the persons on board, stating what number of negroes or other people of colour sailors or others are on board, and that he be ordered to detain any vessel, other than Coasters belonging to this state, having on board persons of colour coming from any foreign port or place, till they shall give satisfactory security to carry such negroes or people of colour out of this state."<sup>20</sup> The people of Charleston, in other words, wanted every vessel coming into the harbor screened for all Negroes who could transport the ideas and the example either of the French Revolution or the insurrection on Santo Domingo.

In early September of that year an event occurred which illustrates the determination of the people of Charleston to enforce these resolutions. On September 1 a notice appeared in the South Carolina State Gazette calling for a meeting of all the citizens of Charleston at the Exchange the next day "on matters of great importance."<sup>21</sup> The meeting was postponed until September 5 and three days later another notice appeared in the city newspapers which indicated what had caused all the excitement. The notice was written by "the committee appointed by the citizens who met at the Exchange the fifth instant for the purpose of having their resolutions carried into effect, respecting the negroes brought into this state from St. Domingo, by Captain Conolly, of the brig Gov. Pinckney." Although there were only twenty-two Negroes on the ship, they were seized by the committee and seventeen of them were placed in the workhouse. This was done, the committee explained, because "they will be better secured than they could have been on board Captain Conolly's vessel." The other five passengers, who were women and children, were allowed to remain on board the ship. However, the



committee had Captain Conolly give a receipt for them and required him "to keep them in safe custody until he shall leave this port." The committee also assured the rest of the city that once the Pinckney was ready to leave the harbor they would see to it that those at present in the custody of the warden of the workhouse were put back on board the ship. On September 22 the committee reported "that the negroes in question had been removed from the state five days earlier."<sup>22</sup> Later that year when the state's General Assembly met, the law prohibiting the importation of new slaves was revised and extended until 1797.<sup>23</sup>

There is good reason to believe that the resolutions of 1793 and 1794 were carried out informally for at least a decade. For example, in May 1797 Victor Dupont, the French consulat Charleston, protested vigorously against the action of the city in forcing the French mulatto general, Marshall Besse, to put up a bond in order to remain in the state. The bond was finally remitted but not until Dupont had convinced the city officials that Besse was on an official mission on behalf of the French government.<sup>24</sup> Throughout 1797 several notices appeared in the city's newspapers stating that the governor had given orders that captains of all vessels entering the harbor had to report on oath the number of Negroes on board their ship and none could be put on shore without first receiving legal permission.<sup>25</sup> Another incident occurred in July 1798 when a ship carrying twenty-one French Negroes from Port-au-Prince attempted to enter Charleston harbor. The ship was allowed to anchor under the guns of Fort Johnson only long enough for the commander of the fort to discover the Negroes. The ship was then immediately ordered out of the state's waters.<sup>26</sup>

The people of South Carolina remained fearful of the influence from the West Indies even after tensions between the United States and France had subsided with the peace conventions of 1800.<sup>27</sup> As a result of the Gabriel Insurrection in Virginia that year, the citizens of Charleston began to strictly enforce its ban upon the entrance of free Negroes from other states as well. In many other ways South Carolina began to withdraw itself from the mainstream of American life at this time. Knowing the dangerous consequences of ideas of equality and disputes over the question of slavery from their experiences with Santo Domingo, the people of South



Carolina continued to retain these extralegal measures to insure such ideas and disputes would not enter the state. Although these measures were not enacted into law, there are several indications that they were supported by the majority of the citizens in the belief that they were for the good of the community.<sup>28</sup>

A good example of how determined they were to isolate themselves from dangerous ideas, particularly from the West Indies, is found in an incident which occurred in Charleston in March 1800. On March 9, 1800, a British ship, the brig Mary, sailed into Charleston from Kingston, Jamaica. On board the ship, which had come to Charleston for some emergency repairs, were a number of black British troops. The ship somehow was allowed to pass by Fort Johnson and "come up to the City: by which measure much anxiety in the minds of the Citizens was excited." The vessel was met at the docks by a number of armed citizens who refused to allow it to drop anchor. Instead, the ship was boarded and steered back out to Fort Johnson where it anchored under the guns of the fort. A detachment of militia was placed on board the vessel as a permanent guard.<sup>29</sup>

The ship's sudden arrival brought about a great deal of concern in Charleston. Governor John Drayton immediately sent a message to the British consul in Charleston asking why the ship had entered the harbor. Drayton also explained the citizens had acted the way they did because the "particular interest of this state requires, that in such cases, due vigilance be used towards promoting the public good." Drayton went on to assure the consul that it was "the earnest wish of the government of the United States, and of this state, to protect within our jurisdictions the rights of all powers in amity; when that can be done, consistently with local and indispensable precautions, which our particular situation in certain cases requires." Drayton also asked for the British consul to see to it that the Negroes on board the Mary not be allowed to "use any fire-arms whatever while in the port" and that any such weapons be secured by him.<sup>30</sup>

The British consul, Benjamin Moodie, was outraged by the state's conduct, informing the governor that the Mary was a hired transport and that the men on board were in the king's



service. Furthermore, the consul refused to remove the soldiers' guns from the ship and warned Drayton that he was sending a message to the British ambassador informing him of the state's actions.<sup>31</sup> Moodie's refusal to remove the guns prompted Drayton to write J.J. Pringle, the state's attorney general, expressing his apprehensions that the Negroes in the harbor were still armed. He stated that "the anxiety of the citizens are alive on this occasion and several have suggested to me, the measure of securing the arms with which the Black troops are furnished." Drayton then went on to express the conception South Carolinians had come to have of any blacks from the West Indies. He had "reason to believe that some of the Black troops, have been and probably now are notorious Villians; and that as French Negroes they have been concerned in some of the mischief of the West Indies." The governor therefore wanted to know if there was any way to seize the guns of the ship without causing a diplomatic confrontation between the United States and England. Although he feared the consequences of the Negroes being allowed to continue to possess their guns, Drayton concluded his letter by pointing out the main reason for even considering the seizure. He said that he was for "discouraging as publicly as I can, any black troops or Negroes of suspicious descriptions from entering this state; and therefore without glaring impropriety if I can withhold their arms from them until their departure, I should like to do it."<sup>32</sup>

The governor, however, did not restrict his efforts to attempting to seize the guns on board the Mary. He also sent a message to the Commissioners of Pilotage. He asked them "to give positive direction to all pilots under your control, that they bring all vessels coming in with people of colour, to anchor at Ft. Johnson. That they conduct themselves in a like manner to all vessels of war, and transports of foreign nations, coming into this port."<sup>33</sup> Drayton also sent a message on March 22 to the British consul informing him that only white persons would be allowed to assist in repairing the ship. On the same day he also sent orders to the commander of Fort Johnson, that on "no account" should the Mary be allowed to return to the city without his permission. Drayton also ordered that "no Negroes or people of colour of any description whatever bond or free, are to be allowed to enter the said Brig or to speak with any Negroes or people of colour on board. Nor are any Negroes or people of colour whatever to be allowed to depart



from the said vessel without permission thereof obtained in writing from me."<sup>34</sup>

In response to the British consul's complaint to the British ambassador, Drayton took care that his side of the story would also be heard. On March 26, he wrote a letter to the Secretary of State Timothy Pickering in an attempt to justify his actions concerning the Mary. He said that for some time it was believed that Negroes from the West Indies were to be landed in South Carolina "and for that reason, we have not only been watchful, but jealous of such arrivals in this state. This proceeds from our particular local situation; which renders the introduction of all Negroes (except those particularly allowed by treaty) inadmissible; and as we deem, incompatible with the safety of the state." Drayton then asked Pickering to "judge what must have been the public anxiety when Negroes, were not only introduced into this port, in an armed transport Brig, under British authority; but when it was discovered these Negroes were all regularly armed and organized into a company....It is said she came in here in distress but she might have gone much further in safety, without entering a State, the feelings of whose citizens, are so alive to apprehensions on this subject."<sup>35</sup>

The Mary sailed out of Charleston before the controversy became serious and the propriety of the informal measures preventing the entrance of free Negroes into the state remained unquestioned. These measures, therefore, continued to be utilized periodically in Charleston until 1803. Similar actions to seal off the state were also used in other locations along the coast.<sup>36</sup>

In 1803 the resolutions first adopted by citizen groups a decade earlier ceased being enforced. One reason for their abandonment was the reopening of the external slave trade by the General Assembly that same year. Another factor also contributing to their disappearance was that stability was finally being restored in the West Indies. The early measures are important, however, as symbols of a tendency occurring in the state at that time. Thirty years before the Denmark Vesey affair, and forty years before the nullification controversy, South Carolina had already begun to isolate itself from the rest of the world. This tendency of maintaining internal stability by restricting the flow of new ideas into the state



was accelerated at the turn of the century in response to the antislavery attacks by the Methodist Church and an increase in antislavery sentiment in the North in general.<sup>37</sup> Numerous articles in various southern magazines and letters in newspapers stated that it was this indiscreet zeal of the abolitionists which would create another Santo Domingo in the Southern states.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in 1822, with many in the state perceiving that they were facing a threat as serious as that of 1793, it is not surprising that they turned to the same devices they had used earlier to protect themselves.

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<sup>1</sup>The early development of these meetings is discussed in Pauline Maier, "The Charleston Mob and the Evolution of Popular Politics in Revolutionary South Carolina, 1765-1784", Perspectives in American History IV (1970), pp. 173-196. By far the most thorough study of South Carolina's Negro Seamen Acts is Alan F. January, "The First Nullification: The Negro Seamen Controversy in South Carolina, 1822-1860, (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1976). Also important, however, is Philip M. Hamer, Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1822-1848," Journal of Southern History I (1935), pp. 138-168.

<sup>2</sup>Works stressing South Carolina's irrational or hysterical actions during this period have been numerous in the last two decades but some of the most important include Richard C. Wade, "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration," Journal of Southern History, III (1964), 143-161; William W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1816-1836 (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1968), especially pp. 50-60 and 112-130. Marina Wikramanayake, A World in Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), especially pp. 130-160. Steven A. Channing, Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1970); Arthur Zilversmit, The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 186, 189-190, 202; and Howard A. Ohline, "Georgetown, South Carolina: Racial Anxieties and Militant Behavior, 1802," South Carolina Historical Magazine, LXXIII (1972), 130-140.



<sup>3</sup>John Lofton, Insurrection in South Carolina: The Turbulent World of Denmark Vesey (Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1964), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>That the Denmark Vesey affair was equated with the events during the 1790's see Achates [Thomas Pinckney] Reflections Occasioned by the late Disturbances in Charleston. (Charleston, S.C. 1822); and Judge William Harper, "The Tenth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States; with an Appendix," Southern Review, I (February and March 1828), pp. 229-230.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of the state's early reaction to the French Revolution and the events in the West Indies see George D. Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Dominique Upon South Carolina: 1790-1805," (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1975), pp. 10-45. Also see R.R. Palmer, The World of the French Revolution: Ten Years that Shook the World (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957). Even when word reached the state that Louis XVI had been executed South Carolinians found it difficult to be critical. When Charles Cotesworth Pinckney heard of the king's death he wrote his brother that "altho every feeling must lament his death,...yet we are too far from the scene of the action...to determine whether the measure was positively wrong or excusable, or justifiable." He did, however, feel that the execution and other such excesses of the French were merely "commotions which are the natural consequence of all great revolutions" and were only temporary in nature. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney to Thomas Pinckney, January 7, 1793, Pinckney Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>6</sup>Charleston, S.C. Columbia Herald, August 8, 1793; Charleston, S.C. City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, September 17, 1793. The best general treatment of the events on Santo Domingo during this period is Thomas O. Ott, The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press); also see Philip D. Curtin, "The Declaration of the Rights of Man in St. Dominque, 1788-1791," Hispanic American Historic Review XXX (1950), pp. 157-175.

<sup>7</sup>The news of the "complete annihilation of that once beautiful and opulent city" was confirmed in South Carolina on July 10, 1793. City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, July 10, 1793;



Charleston, S.C., State Gazette of South Carolina, July 10, 1793; and City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, July 16, 1793.

<sup>8</sup>William Read to Jacob Read, August 25, 1793, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, New York Public Library; "Accounts of the Benevolent Society to the Corporation of Charleston for sums paid for the reception of the poor French from Santo Domingo," September 30, 1793, General Assembly, Accounts Received, 1797, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History.

<sup>9</sup>"Letters of Rusticus," June 20, 1794. This letter and two others were written between June 20 and August 7, 1794 from St. Andrews Parish and addressed to "Gentlemen." These letters have been attributed to Alexander Garden, who later wrote Anecdotes of the Revolutionary War in America, with Sketches of Character of Persons the Most Distinguished, in the Southern States, for Civil and Military Services (Charleston, S.C., 1822). The letters are located in the South Carolina Historical Society (hereinafter cited as SCHS).

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Newton to Captain Edward Blake, August 11, 1793; James Wood to the Governor of South Carolina, August 9, 1793; Peter Gram to Col. Vanderhorst, August 16, 1793, Senate Messages Received from the Governor and Enclosures, 1793-1795, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History. For a more detailed treatment of this insurrection scare see Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Dominique Upon South Carolina," pp. 55-66.

<sup>11</sup>William Moultrie to the South Carolina Senate, December 3, 1793, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, South Caroliniana Library; Colonel A. Vanderhorst to Captain McKelvey, August 26, 1793, Order Book, 30th Regiment 7th Brigade, South Carolina Militia, 1793-1814, SCHS; City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, September 7, 1793.

<sup>12</sup>Charleston's "mass" or "town" meetings during the 1790's are an aspect of the city's character which has escaped notice from most historians. A notable exception, however, is George C. Rogers, Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969).

<sup>13</sup>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, October 9, 1793.



<sup>14</sup>Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Dominque Upon South Carolina," pp. 62-66. Edward Rutledge, Joseph Vesey, Jacob Read and Edward Blake were all members of both the committee of the Benevolent Society appointed to distribute money among the French refugees and also of the committee appointed to carry out the resolutions passed by the citizens' meeting in response to the inflow of Negroes from Santo Domingo.

<sup>15</sup>Mangourit to Citizen Minister of the Department of Foreign Affairs, December 10, 1793, in "Correspondence of French Consuls in Charleston 1793-1797," Kenneth Murdock, ed., South Carolina Historical Magazine LXXIII (1972), p. 16. City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, October 17, 1793.

<sup>16</sup>"Extra Contingent to the Corporation of Charleston," Charleston City Council to the General Assembly, Accounts Received, November 19, 1796, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History

<sup>17</sup>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser, November 9, 1793.

<sup>18</sup>Winthrop D. Jordan, White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 615.

<sup>19</sup>Columbian Herald, June 4, 1794; Nathaniel Russell to Ralph Izard, June 6, 1794, quoted from Ulrich B. Phillips, "The South Carolina Federalists, II", American Historical Review, XIV (1908), p. 735.

<sup>20</sup>Columbian Herald, June 4, 1794.

<sup>21</sup>South Carolina State Gazette, September 1, 1794.

<sup>22</sup>Columbian Herald, September 5, 8, and 22, 1794.

<sup>23</sup>S.C. Statutes, VII, pp. 431-433.

<sup>24</sup>Rayford W. Logan, The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti 1776-1891 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), p. 50; Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1903, II, pp. 1020-1022.



<sup>25</sup>Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Dominque Upon South Carolina," pp. 95-112.

<sup>26</sup>"Charleston, July 17," in Georgetown, S.C., Georgetown Gazette, July 31, 1798.

<sup>27</sup>Charleston, S.C., South Carolina State Gazette, October 30, 1800; Address to the Citizens of South Carolina, on the Approaching Election of President and Vice-President of the United States. By a Federal Republican (Charleston, S.C. 1800), pp. 16-17.

<sup>28</sup>Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Dominque Upon South Carolina," pp. 46-164.

<sup>29</sup>John Drayton to the Commissioners of Pilotage, March 17, 1800, Executive Letterbook 1800-1802, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History; William Read to Jacob Read, March 21, 1800, Read Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>30</sup>John Drayton to British Consul, March 10, 1800, Executive Letterbook, 1800-1802, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History, Drayton had recently assumed the office of governor as a result of the death of Edward Rutledge a few weeks earlier.

<sup>31</sup>John Drayton to Timothy Pickering, March 26, 1800, Executive Letterbook, 1800-1802, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History.

<sup>32</sup>John Drayton to J.J. Pringle, March 12, 1800, Executive Letterbook, 1800-1802, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History.

<sup>33</sup>John Drayton to Commissioners of Pilotage, March 17, 1800, Executive Letterbook, 1800-1802, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History.

<sup>34</sup>John Drayton on British Consul, March 22, 1800; John Drayton to Major Freeman, March 22, 1800, Executive Letterbooks, 1800-1802, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History.

<sup>35</sup>John Drayton to Timothy Pickering, March 26, 1800, Executive Letterbooks, 1800-1802, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History.



<sup>36</sup>One of these alarms is discussed in Howard A. Ohline, "Georgetown, South Carolina: Racial Anxieties and Militant Behavior, 1802," South Carolina Historical Magazine, LXXIII (1972), pp. 130-140.

<sup>37</sup>These changes in South Carolina are argued most convincingly by George C. Rogers, Jr., Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969)

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Judge William Harper, "The Tenth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States, With an Appendix," Southern Review I (February and March 1828), pp. 229-230.



NEGLECTED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN: HOWELL M. HENRY  
AND THE "POLICE CONTROL" OF SLAVES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

John David Smith

Over the past twenty years American historians have witnessed a virtual explosion of interest in Afro-American slavery.<sup>1</sup> The black revolution of the 1960s inspired numerous scholars to probe the origins of white racism and its accompanying institution, chattel slavery. But the fascination of slavery for historians is no new phenomenon. Back at the turn of the century, and throughout the Progressive Era, slavery held the focus of many students.<sup>2</sup> During these years dissertation after dissertation on slavery emerged from the Johns Hopkins University and other pioneer graduate schools. Slavery held a curious attraction for historians in this period. Many found it analogous to the conditions of labor in both the industrial North and the agricultural South.<sup>3</sup> Others investigated slavery because it fitted well into the legal-institutional focus of the new "scientific" history.<sup>4</sup>

These writers, claiming objectivity, impartiality, and a devotion to factual data, worshipped Darwinian science. In their seminars they emphasized the evolution of nonpolitical institutions such as slavery. As early as 1880, a reviewer in The Nation argued, today "Slavery takes its turn with other fossil remains in adorning our cabinets of curiosity and of science, and in being studied under the microscope."<sup>5</sup> The investigation of slavery further afforded a perspective on contemporary race relations. These historians were writing in an age of racial tension--of Jim Crow laws, poll taxes, literacy and property tests, and white primaries. From their research on race relations in the Old South, Southerners fashioned a new proslavery argument.<sup>6</sup> It served as an ideological basis for much of the regulation, proscription, and extra-legal harassment of blacks in the first years of the twentieth century.

One early historian, South Carolinian Howell M. Henry (1879-1956), clearly viewed slavery through the prism of social, or what he termed "police control." Henry grew up in Newberry, which during Reconstruction established itself as a rural cotton center.<sup>7</sup> Although he was descended from yeoman farmers, not planters, during the antebellum period



Henry's family owned at least one slave. After the war the Henrys tilled a family farm of less than fifty acres.<sup>8</sup> They were prosperous enough, however, to send their son to Newberry College, where the curriculum stressed theology and the classics. He graduated in 1898.<sup>9</sup>

After teaching public school for six years, Henry entered Vanderbilt University to pursue graduate work in history. He earned his masters degree in 1908 and five years later received the second Ph.D. in history awarded by the Nashville school.<sup>10</sup> Henry's graduate work focused upon South Carolina. As early as 1909, when beginning work on his doctorate, Henry informed Alexander S. Salley, secretary of the South Carolina Historical Commission, of his serious interest in the history of his native state.<sup>11</sup> Henry's completed dissertation, "The Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina," was in its day an excellent analysis of slave control. Published almost seventy years ago, Henry's study has played a seminal role in the historiography of slavery in the Palmetto State. Yet Henry remains obscure, and his book has generally been omitted from the on-going slavery debate.<sup>12</sup> It is time to rescue Howell M. Henry from oblivion.

Upon completing his doctorate, Henry joined the faculty at Emory and Henry College in Virginia. He spent his entire career there, as professor of history and economics (1913-1918, 1940-1953), and as dean (1918-1940).<sup>13</sup> With the exception of an article on Tennessee's slave laws, his dissertation remained Henry's sole contribution to the slavery field. Instead of publishing, he devoted his energies to guarding Emory and Henry against the encroachments of intercollegiate athletics. "Henry," writes historian George J. Stevenson, "was committed to stringent academic standards and upholding...the reputation of a small, respectable college in the face of an overweening lust for gridiron glory."<sup>14</sup> Henry's inability to compromise, and what some considered "his unsympathetic and untactful relationship with the students," made him an unpopular campus figure.

Although Henry disagreed with many of his peers over the merits of big-time college football, he shared the prevailing anti-black bias of his day. Henry was, according to a former colleague, "one of his generation who 'loved a Negro and had absolutely no use for the Negro'"--"an unreconstructed Southern-



er"--"a 'gentleman of the old school-South' (in the best and worst sense of the phrase)."16 Strongly opposed to integration, he feared that racially mixed schools would result in inferior education for blacks and whites alike.17 A friend recalls one Methodist Race Relations Sunday in the 1950s, when Henry "caused some stir by getting up and walking out of the...chapel service." The minister had addressed too "clearly and unconventionally" the civil rights question.18

Threads of Henry's later antipathy toward the Negro appeared throughout his 1914 monograph on slave control in South Carolina. Like most white historians who studied slavery in these years, Henry viewed blacks through racist eyes. South Carolina's 1712 slave code was designed, he said, to control "African negroes with barbaric traits." Much of the slave legislation concerned thievery by slaves, which Henry considered still "the colored person's inherent weakness." Slave patrols resulted from the early need to "hold in check this irresponsible and often dangerous part of Southern society." And Henry agreed with antebellum southern whites who asserted that the slaves' "primitive condition" and lack of moral responsibility" made them unfit to testify in court cases against whites. In his judgment, overseers were a necessity in antebellum South Carolina. It was incomprehensible that "the best results could be had from a large plantation entrusted entirely to negroes."19

In spite of his racism, Henry's research was exhaustive. He examined what in his day was an awesome volume of printed and manuscript sources in addition to "testimony of ante-bellum people still living." His use of pamphlets, government documents, and newspapers--materials which he called "purely original sources"--set a standard for later historians. Especially noteworthy were his findings in town and city ordinances, district records, and newspapers. For example, in order to determine how the slave laws were enforced, Henry examined the manuscript records of nine counties representative of every geographical section of South Carolina. He also gleaned valuable information on slave trial procedure from criminal court records contained in the various Sessions Journals. But his most significant methodological contribution was Henry's examination of the files of thirty-seven newspapers located in the Charleston and University of South Carolina Libraries, and in private collections.20



Henry was one of few early historians of slavery to examine in any detail why the various slave laws were passed. He argued that most slave laws were shaped by expediency, rather than from a fixed theory of slave treatment. Statutes were written for emergencies such as insurrections and rarely were consulted for the daily plantation routine. Laws against slave trading with white merchants, for example, were generally established "as occasion demanded." Sectional differences within South Carolina, explained Henry, also influenced slave legislation. In the upland regions with a low concentration of slaves, farmers made few demands for rigid slave laws. Their lowcountry neighbors, however, the affluent Carolina planter elite, required strict slave regulations because of the large slave population in their districts.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout his monograph Henry stresses the great power of this planter class in shaping slave legislation. Planters favored slave laws designed to keep the bondsmen laboring at their highest efficiency. But they also shaped laws to fit their specific needs. An example is the public reimbursement paid a master if his slave was convicted of a capital crime. Henry also reached the highly significant conclusion that slave laws indirectly benefited non-slaveholders, who feared the results of an uncontrolled population of blacks in their midst. According to Henry:

Slavery was not only an economic and industrial system,...but more than that, it was a gigantic police system, which the poor man in the up-country as well as the wealthy planter in the lowlands did not know how to replace.<sup>22</sup>

Henry concluded that most slave legislation resulted from an unwarranted fear of slave revolts. The 1739 Stono revolt and several other conspiracies notwithstanding, he argued that the widespread paranoia was out of touch with reality. Regardless, each alleged uprising prompted increasingly severe slave laws. In the wake of the Stono insurrection, a strict slave code was passed to supplement the 1712 code. Similarly in 1822, after the Vesey plot, measures were enacted to tighten controls on the blacks. Legislative action was begun to oust free Negroes from the state,



new manumissions were prohibited, and the Seamen Acts were passed restricting blacks aboard ships docked in South Carolina ports.<sup>23</sup>

For the day-to-day regulation of their bondsmen, South Carolinians established slave patrol ordinances. But according to Henry, enforcing these laws proved more difficult than passing them. Frequently masters were lax in their handling of slaves, allowing them to visit friends or relatives on neighboring plantations. On the other hand, masters feared the mishandling of their chattels by non-slaveholding patrol-ers who "looked upon the patrol as the guarantee of...[their] safety from evils often perpetrated by the black race." Henry considered the abuse of slaves by patrols "the greatest evil of the system;" it gave police power over the bondsmen to "unscrupulous persons" rather than to "the better class."<sup>24</sup>

One of the more important features of Henry's work was his analysis of the enforcement of slave laws. Typical laws enforced infrequently were prohibitions against importing slaves, hiring bondsmen out, and allowing them to trade with whites. Slave patrols frequently ignored all but the most suspicious slave conduct and allowed blacks from adjacent plantations to congregate. Separate church services for bondsmen with black preachers also were tolerated in direct violation of the law. And Henry doubted whether slaves were punished for petty crimes such as swearing, smoking, and loitering--although all were prohibited by slave ordinances. More seriously, laws for the punishment of whites guilty of killing or excessively punishing slaves were enforced only when evidence proved a blatant violation.<sup>25</sup>

Certain laws, however--the Seamen Acts and ordinances against slave stealing--never were evaded. The latter crime was a capital offense and was vigorously enforced. In Henry's judgment, the power of the master class in South Carolina was proven by the fact that slave stealing was considered a more heinous crime than murdering a bondsman. Killing a slave while correcting him was justifiable, he added, under the ownership of chattel personal. But slave stealing was a threat to the "entire stability of the whole system and was subversive of the interests of society." To the South Caro-



lina planter, the slave stealer became "the anarchist of Southern serfdom."<sup>26</sup>

Regardless of which ordinances were enforced, Henry rated Charleston the most difficult location to police slaves. Anticipating Richard C. Wade's later work, Henry recognized that the city contained several impediments to effective slave control. First, the urban environment offered slaves more opportunities to abuse laws than were available to rural slaves. This situation required flexible laws and police enforcement. Second, many of Charleston's bondsmen were skilled and permitted to hire themselves out. Regulated only minimally by their masters, these slaves were granted considerable personal freedom. The presence of large numbers of free blacks in the city was yet another force working against the strict enforcement of slave ordinances. Despite these factors, Henry concluded that the amount of slave crime in Charleston was small. Serious crimes were punished in the city's workhouse, which he considered "an intelligent method of dealing with the troublesome problem of police control." Still, the Charleston Neck remained an impregnable haven for runaway slaves.<sup>27</sup>

Few of the problems of urban slave control were found on the large plantations where overseers disciplined the bondsmen. Henry's chapter on the overseer was one of the earliest and most perceptive scholarly analyses of the role of that figure in the slave system. He argued that the overseer, not the slave driver, was the most powerful force on the plantation next to the master. By virtue of the 1712 law requiring all absentee masters to have a white man present on their plantations, the overseer became a permanent fixture on the plantation. As "a plantation quasi-police officer" he generally dictated plantation discipline and became "an economic necessity" for plantation management. Although overseers as a class lacked definite legal status, they held all of the responsibilities accompanying slave ownership. And frequently the overseer took "the place of the master in his paternal relation of duty and responsibility to the slave."<sup>28</sup>

The best overseers, argued Henry, served both the master and slave well. They contracted with the slave owner to provide slaves with adequate food, clothing, and humane treatment. But the average overseer was "a misfit, a makeshift," who



neither fully accepted his "middle position in society" nor completely satisfied his employer. Low wages and the nature of the job--"Stern necessity...forbade even a tendency toward kindness"--often made the overseer cruel,"coarse and brutal." Further, the overseer usually came from the non-slaveholding and non-propertied class of southern whites--"the least fitted morally and temperamentally for the position." He often was distrustful and jealous of the slaveholders because, for him, "Overseeing was a step to nothing." "In a sense," concluded Henry, the overseer "like the slave he controlled, found no hope or ambition in the system."<sup>29</sup>

Contemporary reviewers recognized merit in Henry's monograph. In the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Wallace Carson praised it as exhaustive both in research and coverage. He considered the book broader than its title suggested.<sup>30</sup> The reviewer in the Journal of Negro History complimented Henry's documentation, and made no reference to his racism.<sup>31</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips, the leading student of slavery of his day, agreed with Henry's argument that men more than laws controlled slaves. His own research confirmed the thesis that slave laws were employed predominantly in emergencies. Phillips, himself a pioneer in the use of plantation records, found Henry's citations to manuscript court records "especially welcome." He lauded the author's statements that responsible South Carolinians sought to reform abuses in the state's slave code, especially in slave trial procedures.<sup>32</sup> But both Carson and Phillips noted weaknesses in the book. It contributed "nothing strikingly new... either in theory or in fact," charged Carson. Phillips faulted Henry's style, "that which is unhappily common in doctoral dissertations."<sup>33</sup>

Despite Phillips' disclaimer, he was impressed enough with Henry's book to cite it several times in his own writings. In American Negro Slavery (1918), and Life and Labor in the Old South (1929), Phillips drew upon Henry to document references to such topics as slave revolts, patrols, trial procedures, and free blacks. And from among the mass of state studies on slavery, he chose The Police Control of the Slave, along with one other book, as "monographs of note."<sup>34</sup> Other historians, too, have incurred a heavy debt to Henry. Examination of books, articles, and graduate theses pertaining to slavery in South Carolina reveals the manner in



which Henry's successors have relied upon his work. References to the monograph fall into thirty-five subject categories. Students most often have cited Henry as a referral on slavery and slave law in South Carolina. Other heavily-cited subjects, in order of decreasing frequency, include slave patrols, slave religion, the Vesey plot, the enforcement of slave laws, free blacks, and slave homicides. The remaining references span a wide spectrum from slave hiring to the Laurens County plot of 1831.<sup>35</sup>

Although students of slavery in South Carolina certainly are aware of Henry's book, they have all but failed to assess its worth. In 1934, David Duncan Wallace remarked blandly that The Police Control of the Slave was "valuable for the entire history of South Carolina slavery."<sup>36</sup> This statement represents well the rather thin level of analysis which the book has generated. Peter H. Wood's comment, "This work is now rather dated, and it devoted little attention to the formative colonial years," typifies the attitude of most recent scholars toward Henry's work.<sup>37</sup> Regrettably, such observations add little to our understanding of the historiography of slavery.

Several students, however, have questioned specific aspects of Henry's work. Writing in 1943, Herbert Aptheker challenged the statement that forty-four blacks and whites died during the Stono uprising. Aptheker's research led him to conclude that "probably about twenty-five whites and twice that number of slaves were killed."<sup>38</sup> More recently, Michael S. Hindus also faulted Henry's statistics. Whereas Henry argued that "the usual number" of slaves executed annually for criminal offenses "was two or three," Hindus found that, "The total number of executions averaged six per year or about twice as many as previous estimates."<sup>39</sup> And three other historians, Alan F. January, A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., and David W. Cole, have uncovered flaws in Henry's book as well. January discovered a "grossly inaccurate" account of enforcement of the Seamen Acts. Higginbotham and Cole identified unsupported assertions.<sup>40</sup>

In the light of modern scholarship on slavery, Henry's work is subject to more severe criticism. Its racist and elitist bias--written from the perspective of the veranda, not from the slave quarters--clearly dates the volume.



Unlike recent authors, he ignored both the psychological damage which the slaves may have endured, and the blacks' unquenchable thirst for freedom. Henry's method of treating South Carolina slave laws implied--without sufficient evidence--that conditions for bondsmen in that state were unique. As Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman have noted, he made no attempt to relate slave control to the economic aspects of the institution.<sup>41</sup> Further, by emphasizing that many slave laws were not enforced, Henry argued implicitly that slavery was mild in the Palmetto State.

Even so, it is surprising that historians have missed the many strengths in Henry's monograph. In several important ways it is unique among the mass of books and articles on slavery written during the Progressive Era. Many of these studies stressed slave law and resembled verbatim listings of statutes and court decisions.<sup>42</sup> But Henry's book was more broadly based and interpretive. It focused squarely on slave law as a system of social control. When The Police Control of the Slave is evaluated solely as an investigation of slave law, its special merits become even clearer. Henry was the first historian to follow William T. Laprade's 1911 mandate that students should evaluate, not describe, the enforcement of slave laws.<sup>43</sup> Because of this analysis and his thorough research, Henry's study far surpassed in quality the only other book-length study of slave law, Gerald Montgomery West's 1890 Columbia University dissertation.<sup>40</sup>

Henry also examined several aspects of slavery--overseers, slave drivers, hired slaves, special slave courts--in greater detail than had previous investigators. His analysis of the Vesey plot was, for its day, quite acceptable. It must be recalled that the traditional interpretation of this abortive revolt remained virtually unchallenged until Richard C. Wade sounded his alarm in 1964.<sup>45</sup> Years before the appearance of Wade's work, however, Henry appreciated fully the difficulties involved with maintaining discipline over urban bondsmen. Observing that white mechanics in Charleston protested the competition of skilled slaves, Henry, like Julia A. Flisch before him, also prefigured Robert S. Starobin's later monograph.<sup>46</sup>

Where then does Howell M. Henry rank in the historiography of slavery in South Carolina? He ranks surprisingly high. Through the years Henry's book has remained a virtual fixture



in the literature of South Carolina slavery. While few have read it cover to cover, fewer still have pondered its importance. But many have found it a useful reference to specific slavery-related topics, despite their general disdain for old-fashioned, rascist, legalistic books. Unfortunately, today's scholars must still depend on Henry for information pertaining to many aspects of slavery in South Carolina. This state of affairs will continue until a monograph is completed on slavery in the antebellum period comparable to Peter H. Wood's excellent study of slavery in colonial South Carolina. Until this void is filled, Henry's book should be used carefully and selectively, but used nevertheless. In its day The Police Control of the Slave was a pioneer, pathbreaking study. Henry took slave law out of the statute books and placed it in the workaday world of master, overseer, and slave. Although he may well remain neglected, his book should not be forgotten.

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<sup>1</sup>See David Brion Davis, "Slavery and the Post-World War II Historians," Daedalus, (Spring, 1974), 1-16; Orlando Patterson, "Slavery," Annual Review of Sociology, 3 (1977), 407-449; Peter H. Wood, "'I Did the Best I Could For My Day:' The Study of Early Black History During the Second Reconstruction, 1960 to 1976," William and Mary Quarterly, 35 (April, 1978), 185-225.

<sup>2</sup>See John David Smith, "The Formative Period of American Slave Historiography, 1890-1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1977).

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, William J. Strong, "Blacklisting: The New Slavery," The Arena, 21 (March, 1899), 273-292; "Slavery in Alabama," The Independent, 55 (June 11, 1903), 1416-1417; Theodore Roosevelt to James Ford Rhodes, November 29, 1904, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress; William E. Dodd to Oswald Garrison Villard, July 3, 1906, Oswald Garrison Villard Papers, Harvard University; Raymond, "Slave Laws Halt South's Progress," Chicago Tribune, January 5, 1908; "What is Slavery?" The Independent, 74 (February 20, 1913), 389; Herbert J. Seligmann, "Slavery in Georgia, A.D., 1921," The Nation, 112 (April 20, 1921), 591.



<sup>4</sup>See Smith, "The Formative Period of American Slave Historiography, 1890-1920," Chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup>The Nation, 31 (December 2, 1880), 398.

<sup>6</sup>See John David Smith, "An Old Creed For the New South: Southern Historians and the Revival of the Proslavery Argument, 1890-1920," Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South, 18 (Spring, 1979), 75-88.

<sup>7</sup>Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 303.

<sup>8</sup>This information is drawn from the Tenth Census of the United States, Agriculture Schedules, 1880, Newberry County, South Carolina, Roll 13, p. 18, and South Carolina Will Transcripts, 1782-1868, Newberry County, Volume 4, Book 1, Roll 20, p. 158, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>9</sup>Report Book (1855-1908), Newberry College, Newberry, South Carolina, p. 223, manuscript in Registrar's Office, Newberry College; Catalogue of Newberry College, Newberry, South Carolina, 1898-'99 (Newberry, South Carolina: Lutheran Publication Board, 1899), p.18.

<sup>10</sup>Official transcript of H.M. Henry, Registrar's Office, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee; Warren F. Keuhl, Dissertations in History (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), P. V. For useful biographical information, see Howell M. Henry Alumni Correspondence File, Vanderbilt University Archives.

<sup>11</sup>Henry to Salley, January 28, 1909, Alexander S. Salley Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

<sup>12</sup>Henry's dissertation was published in Emory, Virginia, in 1914. Negro University Press reprinted it in 1968. The book has been omitted entirely from two of the most influential historiographical essays on slavery. See Stanley M. Elkins, "An Introduction: Slavery as a Problem in Historiography," Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional & Intellectual Life (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963; orig. pub., 1959), pp. 1-26, and Bennett H. Wall, "African Slavery,"



in Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick, eds., Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967; orig. pub., 1965), pp. 175-197. In "The Literature of Slavery: A Re-Evaluation," Indiana Magazine of History, 47 (September, 1951), 255, 258n, Chase C. Mooney all but ignored Henry's book.

<sup>13</sup>H.M. Henry, "The Slave Laws of Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Magazine, 2 (March, 1916), 175-203. In the early 1940s, however, Henry did publish two articles on his fear of the spread of Nazism into Latin America. See "The Nazi Threat to the Western Hemisphere," South Atlantic Quarterly, 39 (October, 1940), 367-384, and "Western Hemisphere Accord," ibid., 41 (July, 1942), 239-253.

<sup>14</sup>Stevenson to John David Smith, June 29, 1976, in possession of the author.

<sup>15</sup>George J. Stevenson, Increase in Excellence: A History of Emory & Henry College (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1963), pp. 137-138.

<sup>16</sup>George J. Stevenson to John David Smith, October 17, 1979, May 31, June 29, 1976, in possession of the author.

<sup>17</sup>John B. Walters, Jr., to John David Smith, August 11, 1976, in possession of the author.

<sup>18</sup>Stevenson to Smith, October 17, 1979.

<sup>19</sup>The Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina (Emory, Virginia, 1914), pp. 6, 30, 28, 15, 21.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 29n, 209, 214-215, and passim.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 6, 7, 79, 20.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 57, 154-155.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 145-154. "As early as 1793," however, Charlestonians "formulated a series of extralegal measures concerning the reception of blacks in the harbor remarkably similar to those enacted thirty years later." See George D.



Terry, "A Study of the Impact of the French Revolution and the Insurrections in Saint-Domingue Upon South Carolina: 1790-1805" (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1975), pp. 6, 61-62.

<sup>24</sup>The Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina, pp. 30-32, 28, 38, 39, 40.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 108, 99, 79, 145, 141, 119, 48, 74. Henry maintained, however, that many of the regulations mentioned in this paragraph were enforced at times of fear of slave revolt. Henry sought to be scrupulously fair and impartial in his assessment of slave punishments. See Henry to Yates Snowden, March 10, 1913, Yates Snowden Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 125, 108, 113, 114, 108.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45, 46, 50.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 21, 18, 22.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>30</sup>Carson in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 2 (June, 1915), 145-146.

<sup>31</sup>C.B. Walter in Journal of Negro History, 1 (April, 1916), 219-221.

<sup>32</sup>Phillips in American Historical Review, 20 (April, 1915), 672.

<sup>33</sup>Carson review, p. 146; Phillips review, p. 672.

<sup>34</sup>Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1918), pp. 477n, 502n, 509n and Life and Labor in the Old South (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1929), pp. 162n (quote), 171n.

<sup>35</sup>This analysis is based on the examination of thirty-eight books, articles and theses which cite The Police Control



of the Slave in South Carolina. Excluded have been bibliographical references to Henry's volume lacking either page numbers or comment. In addition to Phillips' works cited above, see: Anthony G. Albanese, "The Plantation as a School: The Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina, a Test Case, 1800-1860" (Ed.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1970), pp. 198n, 281; Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts (New York: International Publishers, 1970; orig. pub., 1943), pp. 63n, 136n, 168n, 189n, 268n, and Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion (New York: Grove Press, 1968; orig. pub., 1966), pp. 69n, 77n; John L. Bradley, "Slave Manumission in South Carolina, 1820-1860" (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1964), pp. 2n, 42n, 64n, 67n, 86n, 98n, 99n, 101n, 105n; Carl H. Brown, "The Reopening of the Foreign Slave Trade in South Carolina, 1803-1807" (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1968), pp. 10n, 20n; Alfloyd Butler, "The Blacks' Contribution of Elements of African Religion to Christianity in America: A Case Study of the Great Awakening in South Carolina" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975), p. 20; Steven A. Channing, Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 33n; Jimmy G. Cobb, "A Study of White Protestants' Attitudes Toward Negroes in Charleston, South Carolina, 1790-1845" (Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1976), p. 81n; David W. Cole, "The Organization and Administration of the South Carolina Militia System, 1670-1783" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1953), iiii, 65n, 66n; John D. Duncan, "Servitude and Slavery in Colonial South Carolina, 1670-1776" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1972), p. 541n; M. Foster Farley, "A History of Negro Slave Revolts in South Carolina," and "The Fear of Negro Slave Revolts in South Carolina, 1690-1865," Afro-American Studies, 3 (1972), 100n, 102n, 207; Daniel J. Flanagan, "Criminal Procedure in Slave Trials in the Antebellum South," Journal of Southern History, 40 (November, 1974), 541n, 542n, 543n, 547n; Eugene D. Genovest, Roll, Jordan Roll: The World The Slaves Made (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), pp. 685, 722, 745, 763, 794; Lewis Cecil Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 (2 vols.; Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1958; orig. pub., 1933), 1, p. 559n; Philip M. Hamer, "Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1822-1848," Journal of Southern History, 1 (February, 1935), 3n; William C. Henderson, "The Slave Court



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<sup>36</sup>Wallace, The History of South Carolina, 2, p. 499n.

<sup>37</sup>Wood, Black Majority, p. 274n.

<sup>38</sup>Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts, p. 189n.

<sup>39</sup>Hindus, "Black Justice Under White Law: Criminal Prosecutions of Blacks in Antebellum South Carolina," Journal of American History, 63 (December, 1976), 596.

<sup>40</sup>January, "The First Nullification," p.223; Higginbotham, In the Matter of Color, p. 201; Cole, "The Organization and Administration of the South Carolina Militia System," p. 66n.

<sup>41</sup>Fogel and Engerman, Time on the Cross: Evidence and Methods (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), p. 178.

<sup>42</sup>See, for example, John V. Denson, "Slavery Laws in Alabama," Alabama Polytechnic Institute Historical Studies, Third Ser. (1908), 1-55; Jacob Trieber, "Legal Status of Negroes in Arkansas Before the Civil War," Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association, 3 (1911), 175-183; E.M. Violette, "The Black Code in Missouri," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association For the Year 1912-1913, 6 (1913), 287-316.

<sup>43</sup>Laprade, "Some Problems in Writing the History of American Slavery," South Atlantic Quarterly, 10 (April, 1911), 134-137.

<sup>44</sup>West, "The Status of the Negro in Virginia During the Colonial Period."



<sup>45</sup>See Wade, "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration," 143-161, and Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970; orig. pub., 1964). Wade's argument--that no conspiracy actually existed-- has been thoroughly revised by Robert S. Starobin, "Denmark Vesey's Slave Conspiracy of 1822: A Study in Rebellion and Repression," in John H. Bracey et. al., eds., American Slavery: The Question of Resistance (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 142-157; Sterling Stuckey, "Remembering Denmark Vesey," Negro Digest, 15 (February, 1966), 28-41; and Eugene D. Genovese, From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World (Baton Rouge; Louisiana State University Press, 1979), pp. 14, 26, 44-50.

<sup>46</sup>See Flisch, "The Common People of the Old South," Annual Report of the American Historical Association For the Year 1908 (2 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 1, pp. 139-140, and Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971; orig. pub., 1970).



## Commentaries On

### "Slavery and Race in South Carolina"

#### A. Arnold Shankman - Winthrop College

For the past two years I have been wondering if I have been going to the wrong meetings. It has been a rarity for me to attend a historical convention and hear two good papers in a row. If one of the session papers was good and well presented, I counted myself fortunate. Apparently I rose on the right side of the bed this morning because this afternoon I have heard two excellent and well researched papers.

George Terry has called our attention to a rather neglected aspect of South Carolina history. All of us, I suspect, have read Peter Wood's book, know about Denmark Vesey and have a familiarity with the Seamen Act of December 1822. But I wonder if even a handful of us had been aware of what went on in the 1790s.

It seems hard to believe that there was a thriving Jacobin Club in conservative Charleston in the 1790s, but as Professor Michael Kennedy has shown in his work such was the case.<sup>1</sup> But no matter what sympathies there were for France, there were limitations on the patience of Charlestonians. South Carolina in the 1790s was a state with lots of slaves and thousands of panicky slave owners. Reports out of Santo Domingo were profoundly upsetting. Ralph Izard in November 1794 actually worried that the United States would sign an alliance with France and that this would induce large numbers of Frenchmen to come to the United States; this, he feared, would promote sentiment in favor of emancipating slaves. Even earlier the South Carolina General Assembly expressed its concerns about having French slaves in the state. It forbade the importation of foreign slaves. From 1793 to 1801 this prohibition was extended without roll call vote.

Charlestonians were not completely at ease though, for even if the legislation would prevent the bringing in of more foreign slaves, those already in the state, it was thought, were quite capable of promoting mischief. In 1797 there were



rumors of a Christmas Day Massacre. Such did not take place, of course, but not until 1803 would Palmetto planters decide to reopen the international slave trade.<sup>2</sup>

It was against this background that Charlestonians in the 1790s decided that Negro seamen represented a real menace. They decided to act. What they did, however, came not by an official enactment of a governmental body. This explains why their activities have been forgotten or have been dismissed as insignificant. Mr. Terry had to do considerable digging to come up with his narrative. I have no quibble with his facts, but I wonder how the people of Savannah were affected by news of the revolt in Santo Domingo. Did they, as Charlestonians, seek to keep black seamen out of their port? If so, what actions did they take? If not, why were their reactions different? This, however, is the subject of another paper. Perhaps Mr. Terry will turn his attention to that or his work will inspire someone else to consider the topic.

Turning our attention to Dr. John David Smith's essay, we face another aspect of slavery. The paradox of slavery existing--even thriving--in a nation devoted to the concept of freedom has consistently fascinated historians. Consciously or unconsciously each generation, affected by the times in which it lives, seeks anew to explore what slavery was really like and how it tarnished the American escutcheon. There has been a tendency to discard and dismiss the works of the first professional historians of slavery. Most of these men were insensitive racists, elitists and paternalists. Some of their work and many of their assumptions are no longer acceptable to scholars. With the exception of U.B. Phillips their books have largely been consigned to dusty corners in libraries. Years--perhaps even decades--may pass between checkout dates stamped on cards in book pockets.

Dr. Smith represents one of a new generation of historians who are not racist in belief--in fact, this is a generation that actually has black friends and that honestly believes in equal rights. Nonetheless this generation is able to see merit in the works of those who pioneered in writing the history of slavery from the sources.

Howell Henry was born a century ago. Even in South Carolina his name probably will ring a few bells. Henry deserves



some of the blame for this since he confined his publication to one book, probably printed at his own expense, one article on slavery and a few essays on unrelated topics. Whatever the nature of his racial thinking Henry did study newspapers, court records, county documents and other primary sources. These persuaded him that most slave legislation came from unwarranted fears of slave revolts. This in itself was a startling admission in 1914. His study of the role of the overseer foreshadowed later works and was remarkably perceptive. Errors do exist in the book, and caution is needed on the part of the reader. But historians are a contentious group, overly prone to criticize and forget to extract the wheat while they make a big show of discarding the chaff. This paper is a much needed corrective.

We would do well to recollect that even as great a champion of black rights and as excellent a historian of slavery as Bell Wiley, who died in Atlanta this month, admitted he was twenty-five before he knew any educated blacks. It was this association, he declared, that allowed him to break away from segregation and achieve his own emancipation.<sup>3</sup> We can only regret that Howell Henry evidently did not have a similar experience.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Kennedy, "Le Club Jacobin de Charleston en Caroline Du Sud," Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine, 24 (1977): 420-38.

<sup>2</sup>See especially Patrick Brady, "The Slave Trade and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1787-1808," The Journal of Southern History, 38 (1972): 601-20.

<sup>3</sup>Atlanta Constitution, April 6, 1980.



## B. Edward L. Cox - University of South Carolina - Columbia

Today we have heard two differing yet somewhat complementary papers touching on the issue of slavery in South Carolina. George Terry deals with South Carolina's First Negro Seamen Acts, 1793-1803, and John David Smith examines the contributions of Howell M. Henry to the historiography on slavery in South Carolina.

At a time when world attention is focused on the extra-legal activities of individuals and groups in the shaping of national policy and resolution of international disputes or grievances, George Terry demonstrates that such acts are hardly new or unique. Throughout the eighteenth century, citizens frequently sought to influence government policy by holding regular town meetings and at times initiated action which was later ratified by the assembly. Terry's argument is that in the 1790's, in the wake of the force of ideas unleashed by the French and Haitian Revolutions, the citizens of Charleston adopted a number of specific measures severely curtailing the entry of blacks--slave and free--from the Caribbean in general but more specifically from the French island of St. Domingue. Though these measures were not officially enacted into law, many South Carolinians, particularly residents of the port city of Charleston, viewed them as salutary and necessary and they represent an important precedent for the subsequent Negro Seamen Acts of 1822 which were enacted in the wake of the Vesey plot. I concur with Terry in this conclusion.

Terry indicates that during the 1790's South Carolinians initially enthusiastically supported the French Revolution, but when they later perceived that a direct link existed between that Revolution and the Haitian Revolution which was so destructive of the status quo, their enthusiasm chilled somewhat. By 1793 Charlestonians started reacting to the too-liberal entry into the state of blacks whom they feared might have been exposed in one way or another to French Revolutionary ideology. This, coupled with warnings from Virginia of an intended insurrection in that state and South Carolina in 1793, prompted the governor to put the local militia on the alert and to improve the fortifications. But because the Charleston citizenry perceived that such measures might not effectively deal with security problems, they set up committees



to screen passengers arriving and to debar blacks from entering. Such actions and Governor William Moultrie's proclamation ordering recently-arrived blacks out of the state within ten days indicated the prevailing belief that uncontrollable foreign blacks were likely to infect the minds of otherwise manageable or local blacks. Further, the leftward drift of the Revolution by 1794 had become unmistakable and France was deliberately fostering a policy of subversion not only in the English Caribbean but also in parts of the Southeastern United States. With their property and societal stability thus threatened as a result of actions initiated by "agents provocateurs" sent into the region by the French National Assembly, Charlestonians were in the forefront of a movement which sought to seal South Carolina off from the outside world and indeed the rest of the United States. Hence the actions of the citizens, extralegal though they may be, were aimed at preserving intact the institution of slavery which they perceived as indispensable.

I have a few questions to raise and comments to make which would help broaden the focus of the paper and place it in greater comparative perspective. Firstly, how does one explain the fact that these extralegal measures adopted by citizens of South Carolina's lowcountry were never enacted into law during the crucial years between 1795 and 1804? What does this tell us about regional differences within South Carolina? How effective were the military and paramilitary capabilities of South Carolina in terms of policing the Charleston and surrounding areas to insure that blacks from the French Caribbean territories did not affect a landing? Finally, what bearing did Charles Cotesworth Pinckney's treatment in France and subsequent French efforts to invade Florida have on South Carolinians' growing suspicion that France might even "plant" blacks in the state to foment dissention?

The actions of South Carolina's citizens during this crucial period should be viewed in the context of social control within New World plantation slave societies. The disproportion in the slave: white ratio placed additional strains on a white population which was committed to preserving the status quo of society when the French revolutionary ideology threatened to spread havoc throughout the New World and set at naught the dreams of South Carolina's propertyholders. In screening blacks who entered the ports and keeping a more watchful eye on the internal black population, South Carolinians



were acting in a manner consistent with slaveholders throughout the Caribbean during the same period. Like the plague, blacks from the French islands were dreaded and avoided. The prime distinction is that whereas in the Caribbean laws were enacted, South Carolinians opted for temporary extralegal devices to solve their problem.

The paper by John David Smith to a certain extent explains why these extralegal devices might have been deemed desirable or necessary. The difference in slaveholding patterns between upcountry and lowcountry obviously impacted on the quality of slave laws which were enacted for the entire state. Smith points out that not only was compromise necessary between the two regions, but even those laws which were eventually passed were often either unenforced or unenforceable. Lowcountry planters, therefore, who obviously felt more threatened than their upcountry counterparts by the possibility of slave insurrections in the 1790's, naturally protected their interests by extralegal devices where the force of the law was obviously lacking. Terry would well be advised to examine further why such extralegal devices were put into law in 1822 rather than in the 1790s.

In attempting to "rescue Howell M. Henry from oblivion" (p. 2), John David Smith asserts that Henry's Police Control of the Slave in South Carolina was a pioneering work in the field of slave historiography during the early 1900s. Henry's scholarly career rests on a single monograph published in 1913, the result of his doctoral dissertation of five years earlier. Henry's monograph is important because of the use to which he put the vast amount of printed and manuscript sources then at his disposal, and the significance of his conclusions. Having examined in detail why the various slave laws were passed, Henry concluded that expediency rather than a fixed theory of slave treatment was the motivating force behind the laws. To be sure, expediency obviously played a part, but none can deny that fixed racial theories of the place of blacks in the society and the treatment which should be accorded slaves were obviously intertwined significantly with expediency to determine the quality of laws passed and the relative consistency in themes running through them.

Smith rightly points out the extraordinary power of the planter class over the slaves. Yet despite the presence of



a certain ethos among this class, enforcement of the various laws aimed at policing the slave population varied from place to place and from time to time. This would seem to suggest that demographic, economic, and temporal considerations should be accorded a more central place in the discussion of social control than is the case. Henry is obviously aware of the changes over time but fails to delineate them sufficiently.

Smith speculates as to why Peter Wood and other recent scholars should regard The Police Control of Slaves to be somewhat dated. My suspicion is that their position is based partly on the one dimensional picture of the workings of slave society which the book portrays. The individuals being portrayed are seen only through the lenses of laws, newspaper reports, and public journals. We have long passed the stage where the lower orders of any society can or should be seen only through the eyes of the aristocracy. With the "new history" coming into its own over the past decade or so, the scope of our understanding has been vastly enlarged. Oral techniques, quantitative methods, and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of slave societies have all progressed to the stage where they render Henry's analysis truly out of date. While it does not necessarily mean that his book should be discarded out of hand, neither does it follow that it should be given a central role in slave scholarship.

The strength of Smith's paper lies in his attempt to show that Henry's contribution to the growing literature on slavery should be recognized. Both papers presented have raised stimulating issues relative to slavery in South Carolina and increased our understanding of the dynamics of New World slave societies. Despite the outmoded terminology employed all too frequently out of quotes to refer to persons of African ancestry, both authors should be commended for their contributions which can only help to sharpen the kinds of questions we raise about South Carolina's slave society.



# PROHIBITION IN SOUTH CAROLINA, 1880-1940:

## AN OVERVIEW

Frederick M. Heath

&

Harriett H. Kinard

Despite a minor boom in prohibition historiography during the last twenty years, the prohibitionists of South Carolina, their activities, achievements, and frustrations have been largely ignored. Books on prohibition in Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Virginia, and several Northern states, and on many aspects of the national movement which led to the passage of the eighteenth amendment, have enriched our knowledge and increased our understanding.<sup>1</sup> Prohibition is no longer seen as a mere negative back alley of a progressive movement otherwise devoted to using the powers of government to build a more democratic society. Nor are drys any longer pictured as reactionary fanatics attempting to impose their narrow values on an America grown too sophisticated for their limited vision. In South Carolina, for example, those who opposed alcoholic beverages appear to have been moved by disapproval of social customs which they believed radiated from Charleston and by pietistic religious concerns.

This paper is an initial attempt to fill the vacuum of the historiography of prohibition in South Carolina. It is not, of course, an attempt to provide a definitive history of prohibition in the state, but it is hoped that the information and conclusions will be useful to South Carolina historians and to those who compare prohibition state by state. An analytical summary of prohibition from its pre-dispensary origins emphasizes the relationships between five referenda, held in 1892, 1915, 1933, 1934, and 1940, and their results, which often ran counter to the expressed wishes of the majority of those voting. Also, a brief analysis of the vote in these referenda is included to clarify the backgrounds and motivations of South Carolina drys.

South Carolina, like other states, had an active temperance movement from 1830 to 1855. Laws were passed in the 1840's requiring a license for the sale of alcoholic beverages and limiting to a quart the amount of liquor a dealer



could sell at one time to one customer.<sup>2</sup> During the 1850's several towns went dry, but the campaign lagged during the Civil War and Reconstruction. After the withdrawal of federal troops from the state, anti-liquor forces again took to the field, spurred by the national and state Women's Christian Temperance Union and by the Good Templers, a male prohibitionist organization.<sup>3</sup> Francis Willard, the dominating force in the W.C.T.U., visited the state several times and became a close friend of state president Sallie Chapin.<sup>4</sup> The legislature banned the sale of liquor outside the limits of incorporated towns in 1880, and two years later a local option law was passed which led to the end of the legal sale of alcoholic beverages in over sixty towns and several counties by 1891.<sup>5</sup> In that year a state prohibition act passed the House of Representatives but was defeated in the Senate.<sup>6</sup> Politicians, although occupied by the fights between Ben Tillman, who was elected governor in 1890, and his enemies, had been forced to recognize if not to satisfy the anti-liquor movement. Drys next persuaded the state Democratic Committee to permit the holding of a preferential poll at the time of the Democratic primary election held on August 27, 1892. Prohibitionists won the advisory referendum by 38,988 to 29,527 votes.<sup>7</sup> Tillman, however, stole total victory from them by convincing the legislature to enact his own solution, the South Carolina Dispensary system.

The exciting and complicated history of the Dispensary can only be outlined here. The state and counties shared control over a government-owned chain of liquor stores, the state receiving the profits from the wholesale trade, while retail profits were divided between the counties and municipalities where the dispensaries were located.<sup>8</sup> Some prohibitionists initially saw the Dispensary as a worthy experiment because it implicitly outlawed saloons and made illegal sales to those known to be habitually intemperate. Even those drys who were at first pleased with Tillman's proposal continued to insist, however, that it be replaced as soon as possible by total prohibition. Many devoted anti-prohibitionists also opposed the Dispensary.

The Dispensary quickly became enmeshed in legal and enforcement problems.<sup>9</sup> State constables trying to enforce the law met local opposition in forms ranging from refusal by local judges to hear Dispensary cases, to physical violence,



which culminated in the spring of 1894 with the Darlington Riot. The latter began with the killing of one constable and two members of an anti-Dispensary mob and ended only after loyal militia units responded following the refusal of companies from Columbia and Charleston to carry out the governor's orders. Somehow the liquor monopoly struggled on, surviving the jailing of constables by local courts, a United States Circuit Court decision which permitted the importation and sale of liquor from out of state, and charges of corruption. The survival of the state Dispensary in the face of the turmoil that accompanied the years of its existence appears in part to have been the result of its initial association with the popular and powerful Tillman. Also, its most unyielding opponents, extreme wets and uncompromising drys, could hardly agree on a replacement for Tillman's creation. The Dispensary also produced important revenues for state and local governments. As the Lancaster County Treasurer told the local school board, "if it were not for the dispensary money their school term would be shortened by at least a third, and then an ordinary county tax would be from three fourths to one mill higher. ...As whiskey is going to be sold anyway why not derive some benefit from it?"<sup>10</sup>

This pragmatic approach to moral control and government finance was not shared, however, by ardent prohibitionists nor by some wets. From its birth, Tillman's brainchild caused dissension in the dry ranks. One bitter opponent compared those who had at first condoned the Dispensary to Samson: "they laid their heads in the lap of a Delilah and slept."<sup>11</sup> Sallie Chapin supported the experiment, but after her death in 1896 the W.C.T.U. split over the Dispensary issue and over a successor's support of women's suffrage.<sup>12</sup> Those drys who had attacked the Dispensary from the beginning argued that enforcement problems and high sales showed that they had been right.<sup>13</sup> Some opponents claimed the loss of personal freedoms. Two self-proclaimed "Reformers" believed enforcement regulations were "antagonistic to the rights of a private Citizen and [had] empower[ed] Constables to search a gentleman's Wagon or his Buggy even tho' he had his daughters with him..."<sup>14</sup> Gradually the General Assembly disestablished the institution. In 1904 the Brice Act authorized county elections to decide whether or not to retain local dispensaries.<sup>15</sup> The next year a legislative investigating committee turned up considerable evidence of graft and mismanagement.<sup>16</sup> In 1907 the legislature



erased the state Dispensary, permitting counties to decide whether or not local dispensaries would be continued.<sup>17</sup> Under the provisions of the 1904 Brice Act, twenty-one of the forty-one counties voted to keep local government liquor stores. After the abolition of the state Dispensary in 1907, only six of these at first decided to retain them.<sup>18</sup> By the end of 1913, however, there were seventy-two dispensaries in twelve counties, which reported net profits of \$814,803.23 for the year.<sup>19</sup> Local politicians and citizens had become concerned when all the liquor money flowed to only a few counties. The state appeared to be getting wetter, and prohibitionists moved to destroy the remaining whiskey outlets.

In February, 1915, the legislature authorized a referendum where all "qualified electors" would be permitted to vote. If a majority voted negatively, the last dispensaries were to go out of business.<sup>20</sup> The drys won the referendum, which was held on September 14th, with an impressive 71 per cent of the total vote, 41,735 to 16,809.<sup>21</sup> Those who had the means and desire to do so could still order from outside the state as much as one gallon of liquor, wine, or beer each month, an amount reduced to a quart in 1917.<sup>22</sup>

Prohibitionists applauded the victory of 1915, a triumph which had been denied them following the referendum of 1892. One optimist predicted:

Jugs will now be used for cider,  
Kegs and barrels for preserves;  
Soda mint will cure our snake bites,  
Bromo-seltzer for our nerves....

When our arid throats are parching  
For the good old cups that cheer,  
We can go to bed and dream of  
Sweitzer cheese and ice cold beer.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, enforcement remained a problem, as it had been under the Dispensary. William Watts Ball, an unrepentant wet, wrote a friend, "Perhaps there won't be free whiskey in York--but in Anderson, Greenville, Spartanburg, Sumter, Florence, not to mention Columbia and Charleston and the coast towns, look out for it."<sup>24</sup> Governor Richard Manning was soon besieged by correspondents, one of whom claimed "the rur/al district/s



is (sic.) fludded (sic.) with Whiskey."<sup>25</sup> An outraged wife protested to the governor on behalf of herself and her five children that her husband had joined the Charleston Hibernian Society so that he would be able to procure "all the 'booze' he wanted" and as a result was "fast going to the dogs."<sup>26</sup> A black fisherman complained that a local judge had refused him and others permits to purchase a quart of liquor a month for their health.<sup>27</sup> The Federal Government simplified matters of interpretation, if not of enforcement, when Congress in 1917 prohibited the transport of liquor into areas otherwise dry. Soon came the eighteenth amendment, which banned the sale, manufacture, and transportation, but not the drinking, of intoxicating beverages. South Carolina was the fourth state to ratify the amendment.<sup>28</sup>

With the passage of the eighteenth amendment the task of making drinking South Carolinians obey the law passed into the hands of the federal government and remained there until the ratification of the twenty-first amendment, which repealed the eighteenth, in 1933. There were indications the previous year that some South Carolinians had decided the United States government was incapable of enforcing prohibition. A judge of the United States District Court wrote from Anderson of an "intolerable state of lawlessness that has not only accompanied the violations of the law itself, but spread to many other forms of crime of the most heinous and dangerous character," all brought about by national prohibition.<sup>29</sup> Congressman J.J. McSwain of Greenville announced that though he favored temperance, he would vote for repeal because the Democratic Party had endorsed it at the 1932 national convention. Although numerous constituents, including the presidents of Furman University and of Greenville Woman's College, disagreed with McSwain's position, he won renomination and re-election that fall without difficulty.<sup>30</sup> When in 1933 the question of the ratification of the repeal amendment reached South Carolina, the legislature passed the question on to the voters, providing again for a referendum. A majority of those voting opposed repeal, 36,725 to 33,471, though the vote was light, the margin small.<sup>31</sup> Prohibitionists experienced another frustration, however, as the thirty-sixth state endorsed the twenty-first amendment less than a month after the referendum. National prohibition was dead.



Decision-making once more returned to the states, and given the history of the General Assembly's approach to liquor, it is not surprising that the people would be asked to vote once more. The wets, encouraged by the closeness of the vote, were ready for combat. At least that was the mood of a York lawyer who wrote after the 1933 results were announced, "Prohibition won by misguided piety, dense ignorance, and some hypocrisy. For my own part, I have no patience with the women and the preachers. As a class neither one are endowed with very much common sense."<sup>32</sup> The legislature acted predictably in April of 1934, authorizing a referendum at the Democratic primary that fall.<sup>33</sup> Ballots were to be marked either "yes" or "no" in response to the question of whether the state should permit the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. Over four times as many voters cast ballots as the year before, a result of the referendum's being held simultaneously with an exciting primary election for governor. This time, however, prohibition lost, 157,559 to 133,028.<sup>34</sup>

Governor Olin Johnson, who had been nominated, though the driest of the candidates, by the same voters who rejected prohibition, signed a comprehensive law in 1935 empowering the state tax commission to issue liquor licenses.<sup>35</sup> Sixty per cent of the receipts from license fees were to go to the special school account," twenty-five per cent to the county, and fifteen per cent to the municipality where the beverages were sold. A state body gained control over who would be licensed; perhaps its members would be less open to bribery and political pressure than local officials. The money, however, went to schools and local governments, which would, of course, lose it if the drys had their way. Prohibitionists refused to give up, however, believing that it was self-defeating to provide money for schools at the expense of displaying to young people state approval of drinking.<sup>36</sup> Drys kept the pressure on legislators, one of whom announced that an end to all consumption of alcohol was essential to "stop our people in this state from wallowing around in the gutter and going home and beating up their wives and children."<sup>37</sup> After rejecting a bill to re-establish state-owned liquor stores, the General Assembly of 1940 called for another referendum, again to be held at the time of the Democratic fall primary.<sup>38</sup> In 1940 the voters turned prohibitionist again, 189,361 to 130,366, reversing the 1934 result as the vote that year had reversed the one of 1933.<sup>39</sup> The General Assembly of 1941, however, rejected the wishes of the electorate



when the Senate refused by a vote of 25 to 18 to recall a prohibition bill from committee.<sup>40</sup> The 1942 legislature turned down the dries more subtly and pointed up a major concern of politicians by authorizing prohibition, but only if a substitute source of revenue were discovered by July 1, 1943.<sup>41</sup> No new funds were found, and the results of a referendum were again unsuccessful in bringing prohibition to South Carolina.

Between 1892 and 1940 there were five referenda in South Carolina on the issue of prohibition. Only in 1934 did the majority of those voting cast their ballots for liquor. Of the four dry majorities, only that of 1915 led to governmental action outlawing the purchase and sale of alcoholic beverages. South Carolina's vote against the twenty-first amendment in 1933 was not effective because other states approved it, but following both the referenda of 1892 and 1940, the South Carolina legislature refused to follow the wishes of the prohibition majority. In both instances politicians were concerned about losing the money which either state-owned liquor stores or license fees would provide or had provided. Historians of prohibition need to remember that in wet areas funds were accumulated by license fees which would otherwise have been raised by levying less popular taxes or fees than those placed on liquor store owners and whiskey purchasers. During the 1940 campaign, the headquarters of the rather ambiguously named Association for Prohibition Reform asserted: "We believe that the people will not add nearly \$3,000,000 to the already heavy tax burden by adopting prohibition."<sup>42</sup> The wets were wrong; the voters, at least in 1940, were willing but the politicians were not.

The five referenda also provide a data base from which one can test various possible interpretations of the identity and motivations of prohibitionists. Both statistical analyses and impressionistic interpretations by newspapermen and other contemporaries must be used with care. Constructions of voting behavior can best be made by using a combination of figures and other sources. Most of the referenda were held concurrently with Democratic primaries from which all but a few blacks were barred. It can be assumed, therefore, that only whites, excepting a small number of statistically unimportant voters, cast ballots. Voting patterns changed little from 1892 to 1940, though the margins between wet and dry percentages did vary considerably. Using Spearman's rank correlation



formula, the ranks of percentages of dry votes by county correlate with one another from .36 to .91, all clearly "significant" coefficients.<sup>43</sup>

As for hypotheses concerning prohibitionist motives, it is impossible to argue and indeed few have, that whites ap-posed the sale of alcohol out of fear that drunken blacks would ravage white women or fail to show up for work. Many whites did make racist appeals. A prominent prohibitionist wrote in 1905, "In the Negro race, who have little moral restraint, it is difficult to find enough sober bricklayers and carpenters in any town or city of our State to build an ordinary dwelling home, while the common laborers are tending rapidly to drunkenness."<sup>44</sup> South Carolina counties with the highest percentages of blacks, however, constantly voted wetter than those with lower percentages.<sup>45</sup> It is, to be sure, possible that upcountry whites held stronger negative racial feelings than those from the lowcountry, but such an interpretation cannot be tested and seems highly unlikely. Racism, although used by dries to win voters to their side, was not a critical motivational factor.

Neither was urban-rural conflict. Town and city voters were just as likely to vote wet or dry as country citizens. Correlations comparing percentages of the rural population with percentages of the dry vote in the referenda of 1933 and 1934 yield results of minus .05 and minus .06, figures too small to be considered significant. In 1915 the cities of Columbia, Spartanburg, Anderson, Rock Hill, and Sumter, and the towns of Aiken, Bennettsville, Conway, Dillon, Georgetown, and St. Matthews, all voted dryer than the rest of the counties where they were located.<sup>46</sup>

Non-statistical evidence suggests that religion was a central and powerful force behind the anti-liquor movement. Baptist and Methodist ministers and laymen, usually joined by Presbyterians and Lutherans, constantly preached, spoke, and resolved against the evils of the liquor traffic. Baptist churches and assemblies had stressed individual redemption of drinkers through prayer and confession in the early 1880's, but in 1888 the state convention endorsed prohibition by law.<sup>47</sup> Assembled Baptists attacked the Dispensary as "a menace and a curse" in 1904, the Charleston Association



thanked God for the results of the referendum of 1915, and the members of the state convention in 1939 promised to "do our best to bring about ultimately the discontinuance of the legal sale of the accursed stuff."<sup>48</sup> Methodists, although at times divided over tactics and the role of the Anti-Saloon League, also fully supported prohibition before 1900. In 1889 the South Carolina Annual Methodist Conference had refused to approve government action, believing that it was not appropriate for churches "to intermeddle with political issues..."<sup>49</sup> Eight years later, however, the conference endorsed "any efforts which may be made to secure the enactment of laws prohibiting the liquor traffic," and in 1936 resolved that "since the repeal of the 18th Amendment we have seen an increase of drunkenness and social debauchery. This drink demon stalks abroad in our beloved country, giving momentum to crime and weaving the shackles of a destructive habit around the youth of our land and around unborn generations."<sup>50</sup> Presbyterians and Lutherans, although less frequently and vehemently than Baptists or Methodists, also backed prohibition.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, however, for those who see prohibition only as a crusade of pietistic Protestants, statistical correlations do not support this interpretation, at least not very strongly. Rankings of pietistic white church membership as a percentage of total white population when correlated with county rankings of dry percentages of the total vote usually, although not always, yield positive coefficients. The results, however, are in most cases too low to be considered significant or at best demonstrate a rather weak positive correlation. Probably the most useful of the correlations run, which compared the 1915 dry vote with the percentage of white Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans in the total white population, produced a coefficient of plus .29 which, if significant, is only mildly so. Impressionistic evidence from church records and other sources suggests that pietism was critical to the prohibition movement in South Carolina. Statistical analysis, however, suggests that we look elsewhere for important motivating impulses.

What does correlate very highly with the dry vote is another factor, the distance of the county seat from Charleston.<sup>52</sup> The further away from that supposed center of sin the county seat was located, the more likely the county was to vote dry. The 1933 dry vote correlated at a clearly signifi-



## Prohibition in South Carolina, 1880-1940

nificant and somewhat astonishing plus .71, the 1934 vote at an even higher plus .78. One must not discard religion as a cause of dry voting, but it cannot be accurately viewed as the only or even the most important factor. The pleas and preaching of pietistic Christians, whose flocks were larger in the upcountry, helped agitate feelings of dislike, distrust and envy which upcountry residents had felt for Charleston and the lowcountry for generations. Like their Regulator ancestors, upcountry South Carolinians who espoused the dry cause did not always have their way, but they did not fear to make their dislike of lowcountry habits and culture known. Sectional, cultural antagonisms and religious impulses combined to produce South Carolina prohibitionists.

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<sup>1</sup>James B. Sellers, The Prohibition Movement in Alabama, 1702-1943, James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science, vol. 26 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943); Daniel J. Whitener, Prohibition in North Carolina, 1715-1945, James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science, vol. 27 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1945); Paul E. Isaac, Prohibition and Politics: Turbulent Decades in Tennessee, 1885-1920 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1965); Jimmie L. Franklin, Born Sober: Prohibition in Oklahoma, 1907-1959 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); and C.C. Pearson and J. Edwin Hendricks, Liquor and Anti-Liquor in Virginia, 1619-1919 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1967); are helpful published works on Southern states. The best study of a Northern state is Norman H. Clark, The Dry Years: Prohibition and Social Change in Washington (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965). Norman H. Clark, Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition (New York: Norton, 1976), is a general analytical work. For bibliography, see Jacquie Jessup, "The Liquor Issue in American History: A Bibliography," in Jack S. Blocker, Jr., ed., Alcohol, Reform and Society: The Liquor Issue in Social Context, Contributions to American History, Number 83 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), pp. 259-279. Blocker's book contains several useful essays which demonstrate some of the questions which historians of prohibition are now asking.



<sup>2</sup>There is a helpful list of early South Carolina liquor laws in the M.L. Smith Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>3</sup>Joel E. Brunson to the Editors of the Baptist Courier, August 4, 1902, Joel E. Brunson Papers, South Caroliniana Library, claims there were one hundred Good Templar lodges with 4500 members.

<sup>4</sup>See the clippings from the Charleston News and Courier, March 21, 1881 and January 17, 1883, and from other newspapers in "W.C.T.U. Records," scrapbook, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>5</sup>John Evans Eubanks, Ben Tillman's Baby: The Dispensary System of South Carolina, 1892-1915 (Augusta, Ga.: privately printed, 1950), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup>South Carolina, Journal of the House of Representatives, 1891, pp. 252-253; Journal of the Senate, 1891, pp. 374-375, 475.

<sup>7</sup>The State, September 8, 1892.

<sup>8</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, 1892, pp. 62-76, contains the original Dispensary act.

<sup>9</sup>For the history of the Dispensary see Eubanks, Ben Tillman's Baby; Francis B. Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman: South Carolinian, Southern Biography Series (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), pp. 234-261, 375-379, 456-461; and Ellen Alexander, "The South Carolina Dispensary System," M.A. thesis, Duke University, 1940. None of these uses the voluminous Dispensary records at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>10</sup>W.C. Cauthen to B.R. Tillman, November 23, 1899, Clemson University Library.

<sup>11</sup>Joel E. Brunson to Editors, the Baptist Courier, August 12, 1901, Brunson Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>12</sup>Mrs. J.L. Mims, Recorded History of South Carolina Women's



Christian Temperance Union from 1881-1901 (Edgefield, S.C.: privately printed, 1950 [?]), pp. 85-86.

<sup>13</sup>Joel E. Brunson to the Editor, The Register, April 13, 1896, reprinted in The Gospel Temperance Union, May, 1896.

<sup>14</sup>C.J. Stronan and S. McKie to B.R. Tillman and John Gary Evans, December 18, 1893, Tillman Papers, Clemson University Library.

<sup>15</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1904, pp. 485-487.

<sup>16</sup>South Carolina, "Testimony Taken...by the Committee to Investigate the Dispensary," Reports and Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, 1906, vol. 3.

<sup>17</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1907, pp. 463-481.

<sup>18</sup>South Carolina, "Third Annual Report of W.B. West Dispensary Auditor," 1909, Reports and Resolutions, 1910, vol. 3, pp. 263-264.

<sup>19</sup>South Carolina, "Report of the State Dispensary Auditor," 1913, Reports and Resolutions, 1913, vol. 3, pp. 63, 69.

<sup>20</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1915, pp. 88-90.

<sup>21</sup>South Carolina, "Report of the Secretary of State," 1915, Reports and Resolutions, 1916, vol. 3, pp. 715-716.

<sup>22</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1915, pp. 140-141; 1917, pp. 69-75.

<sup>23</sup>The Pickens Sentinel, September 16, 1915, p.4.

<sup>24</sup>William Watts Ball to "Tom," n.d., William Watts Ball Papers, Duke University Library.

<sup>25</sup>C.M. Davis to Governor Richard I. Manning, February 24, 1917, Richard I. Manning Papers, South Carolina Archives and History Department.

<sup>26</sup>Mrs. C.F. Hethington to Manning, March 4, 1918, Manning Papers, South Carolina Archives and History Department.



<sup>27</sup>"Charleston fisherman" to Manning, April 8, 1918, Manning Papers, South Carolina Archives and History Department. For Manning's unsuccessful attempts to eliminate illegal liquor sales in Charleston see Alan Coleman, "The Charleston Bootlegging Controversy," The South Carolina Historical Magazine, vol. 75, no. 2 (April, 1974), pp. 77-94.

<sup>28</sup>Robert M. Burts, Richard Irvine Manning and the Progressive Movement in South Carolina (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), p. 188.

<sup>29</sup>H.H. Watkins to J.J. McSwain, J.J. McSwain Papers, Duke University Library.

<sup>30</sup>Rev. W.J. McGlottin to J.J. McSwain, July 5, 1932, and Rev. H.W. Provence to J.J. McSwain, August 12, 1932, McSwain Papers, Duke University Library; Henry C. Farrell, Jr., "John Jackson McSwain: A Study in Political Technique," M.A. thesis, Duke University, 1957, pp. 77-81, 87-88.

<sup>31</sup>Returns for most counties were found at the South Carolina Archives and History Department. Newspapers supplied the returns for the remaining counties.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas F. McDow to W.W. Ball, November 14, 1933, Ball Papers, Duke University Library.

<sup>33</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1934, pp. 2272-73.

<sup>34</sup>The State, September 5, 1934.

<sup>35</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1935, pp. 325-341.

<sup>36</sup>Pierce B. Yarbrough to Burnet Maybank, February 19, 1940, Burnet Maybank Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

<sup>37</sup>Senator Laney of Chesterfield quoted in The State, February 9, 1940.

<sup>38</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1940, pp. 2058-59.

<sup>39</sup>The State, September 4, 1940.



<sup>40</sup>South Carolina, Senate Journal, 1941, pp. 320-321.

<sup>41</sup>South Carolina, Acts and Resolutions, 1942, p. 1863.

<sup>42</sup>Quoted in The State, August 27, 1940.

<sup>43</sup>Discussions of Spearman's rank correlation, its formula, and tests for significance can be found in many books on statistics. A coefficient of plus 1.00 demonstrates a perfect correlation.

<sup>44</sup>Joel E. Brunson to Editors, the Baptist Courier, May 15, 1905, Brunson Papers, South Caroliniana Library. For similar sentiments see M.L. Smith, "A Speech Advocating the Policy of Prohibiting the Manufacture and Sale of Intoxicating Liquors in South Carolina," n.d., n.p., Smith Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>45</sup>Spearman rank correlations comparing the county percentages of dry votes with the percentages of blacks among the total population result in correlations of minus .61, minus .53, minus .55, and minus .67 for the referenda of 1915, 1933, 1934, and 1940.

<sup>46</sup>Voting results for cities and towns were taken, when available, from newspapers. No official manuscript breakdown of the vote into units below the county level could be found for any of the five referenda.

<sup>47</sup>"Baptist Church, Prince Williams, Hampton County, South Carolina, Record Book, 1812-1937," South Caroliniana Library, pp. 79-81, 83, 91; Minutes of the State Convention of Baptists in South Carolina, 1888, p. 29.

<sup>48</sup>Minutes of the State Convention of Baptists in South Carolina, 1904, p. 56; Minutes of the Charleston Baptist Association, 1915, p. 18; Report of the Baptist State Convention of South Carolina, 1939, p. 128.

<sup>49</sup>South Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1889, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup>South Carolina Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1897, p. 8; Official Journal of the South Carolina



Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1936, p. 32. See also C. Stanley Lowell, "The Attitude of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South Toward Temperance and Prohibition, 1845 to 1919," M.A. thesis, Duke University, 1932, pp. 72-73, 133-135, 198-201.

<sup>51</sup>See, for example, the Minutes of the Bethel Presbytery, 1933, p. 11; and The Lutheran Church Visitor, September 9, 1915, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup>In estimating the distances between county seats and Charleston we have used the map entitled, "South Carolina State Highway System, September 30, 1932," South Carolina, "Annual Report of the South Carolina Highway Department to the General Assembly for period October 1, 1931-September 30, 1932," facing p. 123, Reports and Resolutions, 1933, vol. 2.



## SOUTH CAROLINA NEWSPAPERS AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1890'S

Roger P. Leenhuis

During the 1890's the United States acted vigorously on the world stage. The nation engaged in a war-threatening incident with Chile in the early 1890's, asserted the Monroe Doctrine in the 1895-96 dispute with Great Britain over the Venezuela boundary, defeated Spain in war, and obtained a realm of possessions and protectorates in the Caribbean and in the Pacific.

South Carolina newspapers generally stood against an expansionist and "jingoist" foreign policy, yet they were sensitive about the country's honor and position among the world powers. Editorials frequently displayed a populist outlook and a Democratic party affiliation, while racism was a clear component of the anti-imperialist sentiment. The most significant factors, this article contends, were a concern about national security and interests, a concern about liberty and national character, and a deep humanitarianism.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1891-92 incident with Chile, several papers voiced indignation that the South American nation had insulted the United States.<sup>2</sup> Anger at Chile's apparent transgression accompanied a call for caution and a desire to avoid war. If hostilities came, a number of papers believed, an American victory might be costly.<sup>3</sup>

Opinions were expressed that the United States had been at least partly responsible for the friction. The Marion Star concluded that the United States had furnished the provocation that led to the trouble. Although determined that this country should tolerate no insults, the Columbia Register maintained that American officials in Chile had acted indiscreetly. Similar views appeared in the Charleston News and Courier and The State (Columbia).<sup>4</sup>

The Harrison administration's handling of the crisis drew varied reactions. The Aiken Journal and Review and the Orangeburg Times and Democrat approved the president's Congressional



message of January 1892, as it dealt with the Chilean affair; the latter called it "very mild in tone." Republican President Benjamin Harrison received criticism as well as praise. While demanding that Chile apologize, the Charleston News and Courier viewed the president's course as unduly belligerent, politically motivated, and unjust. The State shared this opinion. There were also some comments that a war with Chile would probably benefit the Republicans and the financial interests that allegedly controlled that party.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1895-96 dispute with Great Britain over Venezuela, there was much insistence that the Monroe Doctrine be respected, and President Cleveland had wide backing. The Anderson Intelligencer stated, "The Monroe doctrine is American law, and England will be compelled to recognize it or engage in war." The Charleston Evening Post saw the success of the doctrine as essential to the survival of republicanism. "An attack on the Monroe doctrine is an effort to crush the genius of American government, to sweep it from the earth which royalty claims as its own by Divine right." After the crisis had passed, the Conway Horry Herald voiced confidence that the United States would encounter less danger from foreign aggression, while the Anderson People's Advocate called for constant vigilance against British tricks to undermine the doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

A few papers had misgivings about Cleveland's threatening stand. The Charleston News and Courier viewed his December 1895 message to Congress as unnecessarily provocative. This journal wanted the United States to uphold the Monroe Doctrine, even at the risk of war, but in the Venezuela dispute the News and Courier conceded some merit in Great Britain's claim that the doctrine was inapplicable.<sup>7</sup> The Edgefield Advertiser scorned Cleveland's ultimatum that the British accept American arbitration or prepare for war. "Of course such a dictum cannot be maintained and the president will have to back down." The Monroe Doctrine was no longer relevant, this paper argued; the United States was strong, and there no longer existed any danger to American interests.<sup>8</sup>

While standing by the Monroe Doctrine, a number of papers feared that war with Great Britain would harm both countries. The Charleston News and Courier, warning that the United States



was ill prepared, expected dire consequences. The Charleston Evening Post likewise predicted calamitous results for both nations. The State speculated that hostilities would be prolonged, and because Great Britain apparently had so much to lose, this paper was confident that war would not occur. In a more casual tone, the Marion Star dismissed the likelihood of hostilities. The Marion paper remarked cynically that "Lombard and Wall Street are too intimately associated" to allow the depreciation of financial values that would result.<sup>9</sup>

In early 1896 the Edgefield Advertiser proposed that if the United States wished to meddle abroad, the country should meddle in Cuba and thereby serve humanity as well as American interests. The press generally did not favor overseas meddling unless there existed a clear humanitarian or national security reason. In the case of Cuba there was a genuine compassion for suffering people. Moreover, political principle inspired sympathy for a people whose struggle for liberty seemed to resemble the struggle that Americans had waged in 1776.<sup>10</sup>

As the Palmetto state press responded to events in Cuba, considerations of national honor and humanitarianism were the main influences. A few papers cited economic factors as well to justify American involvement. The Greenwood Journal, the Marion Star, and the Columbia Register were alarmed that the strife in Cuba was disrupting America's access to sugar. In addition, the Marion paper was exceptional in its concern for the strategic value of controlling Cuba or detaching the island from a European power. Cuba's proximity to the United States, the paper contended, required that it be placed under this country's territorial jurisdiction. The Marion Star forthrightly advocated annexation.<sup>11</sup>

After the Cuban revolt broke out in 1895 the press was largely sympathetic to the rebels. A substantial majority of papers wanted the United States to grant belligerent rights to the insurgents or even to recognize Cuba's independence. President Cleveland's strict neutrality, from 1895 until he left office in early 1897, irritated many papers. Admitting that Cleveland's policy was probably correct "in the abstract," the Columbia Register maintained that Americans were "too firmly wedded to the cause of liberty to take an abstract view of any struggle in behalf of that cause."<sup>12</sup>



A minority of papers desired American neutrality. Among these were the Rock Hill Herald, the Charleston News and Courier, and the Charleston Evening Post. The Marion Star initially proposed decisive action on behalf of the rebels. In early 1896 this paper wanted the United States to recognize Cuba's belligerency or take steps to purchase the island. One year later the Star lauded Cleveland's neutrality. Similarly, at the outset the Anderson Intelligencer favored American recognition of the rebels, but eventually endorsed Cleveland's restraint.<sup>13</sup>

When William McKinley became president in early 1897, several papers hoped that he would take a positive stand helpful to the rebels. The new president moved cautiously, hesitating to commit the country to any specific course. His Congressional message of December 1897 contained a vague threat of American intervention if Spain failed to end the Cuban conflict satisfactorily. A number of papers were disappointed by McKinley's failure to be more forceful. Especially vociferous in criticizing him were the Anderson People's Advocate, The State, and the Columbia Register.<sup>14</sup>

The sinking of the Maine in February 1898 aroused much anger. The State became highly pugnacious, while most other papers reacted indignantly but more judiciously. During the early months of 1898 most papers wished to avoid war, but after the Maine sinking the press became resigned to the likelihood of conflict. The Anderson Intelligencer stated in March, "We believe that war must come unless Spain humbles herself in the dust and voluntarily offers Cuba her freedom." The Columbia Register remarked in early April, "War seems to be inevitable. If it is to come, let it be at once."<sup>15</sup>

Notable for resisting the mounting war sentiment were two Charleston publications. The Evening Post blamed both Spain and the United States for unnecessarily belligerent acts. In its view, McKinley had failed to deal firmly with the "jingo" or fairly with Spain. The News and Courier believed that Spain had made a reasonable attempt to prevent hostilities. The Greenwood Index reversed itself. For a time in early 1898 this paper deplored the growing war spirit, stating that the American people "are worked up to a dangerously high pitch." Soon after Congress declared war the Index approved the declaration "which we think should have been passed two years ago."<sup>16</sup>



Once the war was in progress, the press closed ranks behind the national effort. The time to debate the "righteousness" of the fighting had passed, the Carolina News (Chapin) remarked. The Charleston News and Courier, which had opposed American entry into the conflict, now declared that "every true American" would stand behind the government.<sup>17</sup>

There were occasional protestations that the South would bear an undue burden in the fighting, and memories of the Civil War era were keen. The Columbia Register commented that "the south will share the glory--but the north will reap the profit."<sup>18</sup> Sectional feelings lingered, yet editorial writers showed strong national loyalties. As in the South generally, South Carolina newspapers wanted to prove the former Confederacy's devotion to the country. According to the Camden Chronicle, the South "is today and always has been the most truly patriotic section of the Union."<sup>19</sup>

Of the twenty papers surveyed for this study, ten stood against the annexation of Hawaii, five were agreeable, and five took no definite stand. Of the five in the indefinite category, four wrote in general terms against expansionism and/or opposed the acquisition of the Philippines.<sup>20</sup>

Political principle and national interests were the dominant considerations in the debate over Hawaii. Praising Cleveland's noninterference, the Charleston Evening Post claimed that the United States was building a reputation for uprightness and decency. "As a just nation that has not been bullying or self-seeking but disposed to do justice to great and small the record of our government is clear." When McKinley moved to take Hawaii, this paper declared that the country's republican character was being violated. The Greenwood Index characterized annexation as contrary to the country's past policy and "the genius of our institutions."<sup>21</sup>

Opponents saw the hand of selfish economic interests. The Charleston Evening Post, the Charleston News and Courier, the Rock Hill Herald, and the Columbia Register suspected that the sugar industry, seeking tariff-free admission of its commodity into the United States, was promoting acquisition. Opponents further belittled the notion that dominion over Hawaii would successfully promote overseas trade. The Barnwell People and the Columbia Register doubted that annexation



would help the United States build up its Far Eastern commerce, while the Orangeburg Times and Democrat commented, "Nothing is more false than that we need such possessions as fields for exploiting our commerce. If we desire trade, the thing for us to do is to sweep away our medieval tariff laws."<sup>22</sup>

A few papers offered political and racist arguments against annexation. The Florence Daily Times predicted that Hawaii, as an American territory, would eventually become a state and give the Republican party two additional United States Senators. This paper proposed a constitutional amendment specifying that new territories could never become states. The Orangeburg Times and Democrat expected that the Hawaiians would suffer the mistreatment that Anglo-Saxons customarily inflicted upon "inferior races." This paper observed, "The United States Government has never annexed any populated territory of another race and never will."<sup>23</sup>

National security and interests were of paramount consideration. The Charleston Evening Post stated that "the possession of foreign colonies endangers our freedom from conflict with the interests of other nations." The Greenwood Index asserted that annexation would produce diplomatic troubles and imperil the country's peace.<sup>24</sup>

Among supporters and opponents of American takeover, there was a determination that no other major power should own Hawaii. The Columbia Register, which opposed annexation, wanted this country to discourage possible Japanese designs. Although avoiding a definite stand, the Anderson Intelligencer pondered the islands' future. "We shall now have to pay some attention to them or let Japan have them. Which will the United States do?" The Intelligencer left this question unanswered.<sup>25</sup>

The Conway Horry Herald saw no "practical utility" that justified annexation. The Camden Chronicle wondered, "It may cost more to protect these far-away South sea islands than they are worth." Arguing in practical terms, the Columbia Register contended that annexation would bring no practical benefits which the United States did not currently enjoy. This country already had a naval station in the islands, the Register noted, besides nearly the whole of Hawaii's trade. "What more do we want?" Annexation would involve additional burdens without additional rewards, the Columbia paper predicted.<sup>26</sup>



Rejecting the strategic argument for annexation, the Register doubted that ownership of Hawaii would "simplify or cheapen" the defense of America's coasts. The Marion Star reached a different conclusion, convinced that Hawaii and Cuba should belong to the United States "on account of their proximity to our coasts." For the Anderson People's Advocate, which favored annexation, the overriding issue was foreign control.<sup>27</sup>

England and Germany both want these islands and in the possession of either, they would be the means not only of crippling our Oriental trade, but also would afford an admirable naval station for them in the event of war, where their vessels could rendezvous and attack our commerce and our coasts.

The State rebutted the anti-annexation arguments. On the question of absorbing alien peoples, this paper expected that many Americans would go to Hawaii and alter its composition. The State dismissed the economic conspiracy charge, contending that the Sugar Trust already had everything it wanted. N.G. Gonzales' publication also rejected the notion that acquisition would violate the spirit of American government. To Gonzales the primary issues were international stature and security. Hawaii and Cuba were important "picket posts," needed to protect this country. Moreover, the Columbia paper declared, since Japan had protested the expected American takeover, the United States would set a bad precedent by yielding to Japan's protest.<sup>28</sup>

Also favoring annexation, the Sumter Herald merely commented in 1898, as Congress prepared to take action, that "The islands should have been part of the United States some time ago." The Abbeville Press and Banner, standing without apology for expansion, stated, "Give the American Eagle ample room to stretch her wings. We want all the territory that we can get." The Press and Banner was in a class by itself.<sup>29</sup>

A substantial majority of newspapers opposed American possession of the Philippines. Of the twenty publications surveyed for this article, thirteen stood against, and three were amenable. Of four papers in the indefinite category, three voiced general anti-imperialist opinions.<sup>30</sup>



Uppermost in the minds of editorial writers were questions of liberty and morality. The Florence Daily Times saw annexation as inspired by a "spirit of greed and conquest." The Conway Horry Herald acknowledged that the United States could crush the Filipino insurrection, "but there is a question of right." There was much speculation that the taking of colonies abroad would alter the character of the American nation. Discussing the Philippines, the Sumter Herald stated that the expansionist policy went against "all our theories of government."<sup>31</sup>

South Carolina's states rights tradition and dislike of centralized power in a general government became evident. As the national government became stronger, the Barnwell People and the Columbia Register warned, individual freedom would decline. To the Marion Star, the Constitution was being violated, with grave implications for the freedom of American citizens. The Charleston News and Courier asked if American domination over foreign lands would require a large standing army and a bigger navy, and the paper wondered if these forces might ever be employed to suppress domestic opposition to the party in power.<sup>32</sup>

Editors weighed the possible economic and strategic value of owning the Philippines. Although opposing American takeover, the Anderson Intelligencer desired an American naval station and a commercial port in the archipelago. The Lexington Dispatch wanted the United States to enlarge its overseas markets, but did not regard territorial expansion as necessary to achieve this goal.<sup>33</sup>

Apprehension was voiced that an imperialist foreign policy would increase the likelihood of United States involvement in foreign wars. The Charleston Evening Post, the Lexington Dispatch, and the Orangeburg Times and Democrat made this point, as did the Charleston News and Courier, which forecast that "a policy of conquest" would draw the country into offensive and defensive wars.<sup>34</sup>

Racist arguments stressed the unwisdom of extending American jurisdiction over alien peoples. The Barnwell People explored the idea of ruling peoples who were unfit for self-government "because of race characteristics and long subjec-



tion to Spanish misrule."<sup>35</sup> In addition, a number of peoples forecast that the task of subduing and controlling the Filipinos would be difficult.<sup>36</sup>

Three papers favored annexation. The Camden Chronicle was sufficiently impressed by the "great commercial advantages" in holding the islands.<sup>37</sup> The Greenwood Index grappled, vacillated, and shifted its ground, finally deciding that, "We don't want the Filipinos, but we want the Philippines." In November 1898 this paper asserted that the United States had a moral obligation to hold and govern the archipelago. "America has put herself on a broad humanitarian platform and cost what it may, she should first do her duty and then reward will surely come." In February 1899, soon after the Filipino insurrection against American control erupted, the Index stated that the United States could never conquer the islands or gain the natives' consent to govern. Now the paper urged American withdrawal. As the months passed and the fighting continued, the Index became impatient. In June it wanted the United States to quit or overwhelm the natives with a massive display of force. "If the policy is to conquer, let us conquer and be done with it." By November the Greenwood paper favored an American presence in the Philippines. Desiring American economic penetration in the Far East, it stated that "the islands should not be given up." But the paper insisted that the Americans respect the rights and liberties of the Filipinos.<sup>38</sup>

In a class by itself was the Abbeville Press and Banner, which believed that the Philippines were worth having. The Filipinos, the paper predicted, would eventually be defeated, and they would become useful and loyal American citizens. Drawing upon social Darwinist and racist doctrines, the Press and Banner insisted that the United States impose its rule wherever possible; the law of self-preservation allowed no alternative course. "The white man will settle in the Philippines, and if the Filipinos behave themselves, well and good. If they do not, then let them go just as the Indians went."<sup>39</sup>

Provided that the natives would accept annexation, The State was amenable. The Columbia paper believed in the country's right to expand, and it wanted the nation to be a great power. "But the thought of the United States as a predatory power has been repugnant to us." Because the Filipinos were



resisting the American presence, and because the prospect of a long and bloody conflict loomed, The State joined most other papers in opposition to McKinley's policy.<sup>40</sup>

In February 1899 the United States Senate narrowly approved the treaty which ended the Spanish-American War and provided for American possession of the Philippines. Most of the senatorial opposition came from Southerners. (South Carolina's Benjamin F. Tillman voted against, while his colleague John McLaurin supported ratification).

Historians have usually interpreted the anti-imperialism of most Southern whites mainly in terms of racism. Recent research has stressed the importance of other motives, and this article suggests the primacy of other considerations in the South Carolina press.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This study is based upon a survey of these newspapers: Abbeville Press and Banner, Aiken Journal and Review, Anderson Intelligencer, Anderson People's Advocate, Barnwell People, Camden Chronicle, Carolina News (Chapin), Charleston Evening Post, Charleston News and Courier, Columbia Register, The State (Columbia), Conway Horry Herald, Edgefield Chronicle and its successor Edgefield Advertiser, Florence Daily Times, Greenwood Journal and its successor Greenwood Index, Lexington Dispatch, Marion Star, Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Rock Hill Herald, and Sumter Herald.

<sup>2</sup>Examples are The State (Columbia), Oct. 28-29, 1891; Aiken Journal and Review, Jan. 20, 1892; Edgefield Chronicle, Nov. 4, 1891; Charleston News and Courier, Oct. 25, 1891; Anderson Intelligencer, Nov. 5, 1891; Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Jan. 27, 1892; Camden Chronicle, Jan. 1, Jan. 29, 1892.

<sup>3</sup>The State, Oct. 28-29, 1891, Jan. 18, Jan. 26, 1892; Rock Hill Herald, Jan. 27, 1892; Charleston News and Courier, Oct. 28-30, 1891, Jan. 18, Jan. 27-28, 1892; Marion Star, Jan. 6, 1892; Columbia Register, Oct. 27, Dec. 27, Dec. 30, 1891.



<sup>4</sup>Marion Star, Jan. 20, 1892; Columbia Register, Oct. 27, Dec. 27, 1892; Charleston News and Courier, Oct. 2, Oct. 28-30, 1891, Jan. 18, 1892; The State, Jan. 25, 1892.

<sup>5</sup>Aiken Journal and Review, Jan. 27, 1892; Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Jan. 27, 1892; Charleston News and Courier, Oct. 28-30, 1891, Jan. 18, Jan. 26-30, 1892; The State, Jan. 18, Jan. 20, Jan. 24, Jan. 26-27, Jan. 29, 1892; Marion Star, Jan. 20, 1892. The Marion and Charleston papers speculated that the Republican administration was trying to distract public attention from domestic issues by aggravating a foreign crisis.

<sup>6</sup>Anderson Intelligencer, Dec. 25, 1895; Charleston Evening Post, Dec. 18-19, Dec. 21, 1895; Conway Horry Herald, Jan. 21, 1897; Anderson People's Advocate, Feb. 15, May 17, 1897. Other papers backing Cleveland's stand included The State, Columbia Register, Barnwell People, Aiken Journal and Review, Florence Daily Times, Rock Hill Herald, Camden Chronicle, and Orangeburg Times and Democrat.

<sup>7</sup>Charleston News and Courier, Oct. 25, Nov. 3, Dec. 18, 1895. "Technically Mr. Cleveland is right," this paper stated, but the issue between Great Britain and Venezuela it termed of little "practical concern" to the United States.

<sup>8</sup>Edgefield Advertiser, Dec. 25, 1895, Jan. 8, Jan. 22, 1896.

<sup>9</sup>Charleston News and Courier, Dec. 18, 1895; Charleston Evening Post, Dec. 18, 1895; The State, Dec. 1895; Marion Star, Dec. 25, 1895.

<sup>10</sup>Edgefield Advertiser, Jan. 22, 1896. On South Carolina's response to events in Cuba, see Sylvia H. Vincenty, "South Carolina's Attitude Toward the Cuban War for Independence: February 1895-April 1898" (M.A. thesis, Clemson University, 1976)

<sup>11</sup>Greenwood Journal, Dec. 5, 1895; Marion Star, Jan. 1, 1896, Oct. 20, 1897, Feb. 2, 1898; Columbia Register, Feb. 11, March 21, 1898.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., Dec. 4, 1895; Vincenty, "South Carolina's Attitude...", 25-51. I have examined a number of papers in addition



to those used by Ms. Vincenty, and my research reinforces her generalizations.

A notable example of a paper sympathetic to the Cuban rebels was N.G. Gonzales' The State. Gonzales had a personal interest in Cuban affairs. Soon after the revolt began his paper urged that Cuba be annexed and eventually made one of the American states. Gonzales did not, however, persist in his advocacy of annexation. See the issues of March 1, April 5, 1895. An excellent study of Gonzales is Lewis Jones, Stormy Petrel: N.G. Gonzales and His State (Columbia, 1973).

<sup>13</sup>Vincenty, "South Carolina's Attitude...", 25-47; Rock Hill Herald, Dec. 7, 1895; Charleston News and Courier, Dec. 4 1895; Charleston Evening Post, Dec. 21, 1895; Marion Star, Jan. 1, 1896, Jan. 13, 1897; Anderson Intelligencer, Sept. 25, 1895, Dec. 23, 1896.

<sup>14</sup>Vincenty, "South Carolina's Attitude...", 52-62; Anderson People's Advocate, May 24, Dec. 13, 1897; The State, Dec. 7, 1897; Columbia Register, May 21, 1897, Feb. 11, 1898. The Register assailed McKinley's "policy of retreat and cowardice."

<sup>15</sup>Vincenty, "South Carolina's Attitude...", 67-80; Anderson Intelligencer, March 23, 1898; Columbia Register, April 4, 1898.

<sup>16</sup>Charleston Evening Post, April 21-22, 1898; Charleston News and Courier, April 5, 1898; Greenwood Index, April 5, April 21, 1898.

<sup>17</sup>Carolina News (Chapin), May 4, 1898; Charleston News and Courier, May 29, 1898; Vincenty, "South Carolina's Attitude...", 80-81.

<sup>18</sup>Columbia Register, July 16, 1898. Other examples are Barnwell People, March 17, 1898; Charleston News and Courier, March 10, 1898; Edgefield Advertiser, March 2, 1898, and Rock Hill Herald, July 9, 1898.

<sup>19</sup>Camden Chronicle, March 25, 1898. On sentiment throughout the South, see Richard E. Wood, "The South and Reunion, 1898," The Historian, XXXI (1969), 415-30. In the South as a whole, as in South Carolina, majority sentiment favored entry into the war.



<sup>20</sup>Against annexation were Aiken Journal and Review, Camden Chronicle, Charleston Evening Post, Charleston News and Courier, Columbia Register, Conway Horry Herald, Florence Daily Times, Greenwood Index, Orangeburg Times and Democrat, and Rock Hill Herald. Supporters were Abbeville Press and Banner, Anderson People's Advocate, The State, Marion Star, and Sumter Herald. In the indefinite category were Anderson Intelligencer, Barnwell People, Carolina News (Chapin), Edgefield Advertiser, and Lexington Dispatch.

<sup>21</sup>Charleston Evening Post, Dec. 21, 1895, June 17, 1897; Greenwood Index, Feb. 10, 1898.

<sup>22</sup>Charleston Evening Post, June 17, 1897; Charleston News and Courier, June 15, June 17, 1897; Rock Hill Herald, June 19, 1897; Columbia Register, June 18, June 20, 1897; Barnwell People, March 3, 1898; Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Aug 3, 1898.

<sup>23</sup>Florence Daily Times, De. 1, 1898; Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Aug. 24, 1898.

<sup>24</sup>Charleston Evening Post, June 17, 1897; Greenwood Index, Feb. 10, 1898.

<sup>25</sup>Columbia Register, June 15, 1897; Anderson Intelligencer, May 5, 1897. The Charleston News and Courier, which opposed annexation, expressed confidence, on March 10, 1893, that Cleveland would not let Hawaii fall into the lap of England or another foreign power.

<sup>26</sup>Conway Horry Herald, March 2, 1893; Camden Chronicle, Feb. 3, 1893; Columbia Register, June 18, 1897.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., July 9, 1897; Marion Star, Feb. 2, 1898; Anderson People's Advocate, Feb. 6, Feb. 20, 1898.

<sup>28</sup>The State, June 21, June 23, 1897, June 7, 1898.

<sup>29</sup>Sumter Herald, May 20, 1898; Abbeville Press and Banner, Feb. 1, 1893.

<sup>30</sup>Against annexation were Anderson Intelligencer, Anderson People's Advocate, Charleston Evening Post, Charleston News



and Courier, Columbia Register, The State, Conway Horry Herald, Edgefield Advertiser, Florence Daily Times, Marion Star, Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Rock Hill Herald, and Sumter Herald. Supporters were Abbeville Press and Banner, Camden Chronicle, and Greenwood Index. In the indefinite category were Aiken Journal and Review, Barnwell People, Carolina News (Chapin), and Lexington Dispatch. Opposing annexation but favoring ratification of the peace treaty with Spain was the Anderson People's Advocate.

<sup>31</sup>Florence Daily Times, Sept. 3, 1898; Conway Horry Herald, Aug. 17, 1899; Sumter Herald, Feb. 10, 1899.

<sup>32</sup>Barnwell People, April 21, 1898; Columbia Register, Nov. 21, 1898; Marion Star, Jan. 18, 1899; Charleston News and Courier, Jan. 22, 1899.

<sup>33</sup>Anderson Intelligencer, Aug. 24, 1898; Lexington Dispatch, July 4, 1900.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1900; Charleston Evening Post, Dec. 8, 1898; Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Aug. 3, 1898; Charleston News and Courier, May 5, May 10, 1898.

<sup>35</sup>Barnwell People, Nov. 10, 1898.

<sup>36</sup>Anderson Intelligencer, Aug. 10, 1898; Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Jan. 11, 1899; Edgefield Advertiser, Jan. 11, 1899; Sumter Herald, Feb. 17, 1899.

<sup>37</sup>Camden Chronicle, Dec. 8, 1899.

<sup>38</sup>Greenwood Index, Nov. 3, 1898, Feb. 9, June 22, Nov. 9, 1899.

<sup>39</sup>Abbeville Press and Banner, March 29, April 19, May 10, 1899.

<sup>40</sup>The State, Feb. 6, 1899.

<sup>41</sup>Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines, and the Inequality of Man," Journal of Southern History,



XXIV (1958), 319-31; Tennant S. McWilliams, "The Lure of Empire: Southern Interest in the Caribbean, 1877-1900," Mississippi Quarterly, XXIX (1976), 43-63; Edwina C. Smith, "Southerners on Empire: Southern Senators and Imperialism, 1898-1899," Mississippi Quarterly, XXXI (1978), 89-107.



Commentary On  
"Shaping Forces in South Carolina" "

Winfred B. Moore, Jr. - The Citadel

Professor Leemhuis' paper examines the manner in which twenty South Carolina newspapers reacted to major events in U.S. foreign policy during the 1890's. From this examination, he argues that Palmetto State journalists generally opposed a "jingoist" and expansionist foreign policy throughout that decade. While acknowledging that many factors influenced the foreign policy positions of the Carolina press, Professor Leemhuis concludes that the most significant factors were "a concern about national security and interests, a concern about liberty and national character, and a deep humanitarianism."

This paper casts additional light on areas of post-Reconstruction Southern and South Carolina History. On the broader level, it expands our knowledge of Southern foreign policy attitudes and the degree of their complexity. By documenting Southern caution toward many of the sabre-rattling episodes of the 1890's, Professor Leemhuis challenges the concept of a "militant South" always leading the charge toward the most aggressive foreign policy option available. On the narrower lever, this paper contributes to our understanding of late nineteenth century South Carolina history and journalism. Certainly anyone who has engaged in the time-consuming, eye-glazing, headache-inducing task of reading microfilmed copies of parched newspapers can appreciate readily the research which this paper represents and thank Professor Leemhuis for his efforts.

Although this paper makes contributions, it seems to me that there are areas in which it could be strengthened and suggestions which might be considered in an expanded study of this topic. One possible area for improvement concerns the selection and use of newspaper sources. Professor Leemhuis' study is based on twenty South Carolina newspapers representing the towns of Abbeville, Aiken, Anderson, Barnwell, Camden, Chapin, Charleston, Columbia, Conway, Edgefield, Florence, Greenwood, Lexington, Marion, Orangeburg, Rock Hill, and Sumter. Clearly, this large number of newspapers constitutes a



broad sampling. But I think it would be helpful to indicate the basis on which these specific newspapers were selected. Were they chosen on the basis of circulation, political or economic orientation, congressional districts, geographic balance between the upcountry, midlands, and lowcountry, or for some other reason? Depending on the basis of selection, it would be interesting to know if any cleavages on foreign policy can be detected along these or other lines. If so, why, and what was the relative importance of each? I also think it might have been advisable to include more newspapers from the northwest quadrant of the state, specifically the Greenville News and Spartanburg Herald which represented two of the state's larger cities in the more densely populated, economically developing region of the Piedmont Crescent. As a final thought on sources, there occurs the difficult question of the relationship between these newspapers and the public they served. On balance, was the relationship one of shaping, reflecting, or disagreeing with public opinion? While this is not an easy question to answer it is, nonetheless, an important one to address.

It also seems to me that the paper might benefit by a more precise thesis statement and definition of some of the terms employed. As I read the paper, it was not exactly clear to me whether that part of the thesis identifying motivational factors was being applied to the entire South Carolina Press or merely to the dominant faction which apparently tended to be anti-jingoist and anti-annexationist. If I infer correctly, however, the thrust of the argument is that South Carolina newspapers of the 1890's were predominantly anti-jingoist and anti-annexationist and that the most important factors causing this element of the press to assume such positions were concerns about "national security and interests, a concern about liberty and national character, and a deep humanitarianism."

While it may be true that most of the Carolina press was motivated primarily by the above-mentioned factors, these are very pliable concepts. In the foreign policy debates of the 1890's, opposing sides often embraced these same terms to justify fundamentally different courses of action. As Robert Osgood has noted:

the great debate over imperialism sounded like  
Alice In Wonderland. Both sides used the same



words but the words seemed to mean different things. Imperialists and anti-imperialists alike proclaimed, with equal sincerity no doubt, their faith in America's mission, the spread of liberty, and the regeneration of mankind...each later charged the other with subverting it, while asserting that it alone remained true to the national ideals.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, parts of Professor Leemhuis' paper demonstrate this fact while identifying some of the specific ways in which Carolinians defined these broad concepts. Nonetheless, I think it might be beneficial if the paper placed a little less emphasis on these broad concepts, with which most Americans agreed, and a little more emphasis on any consensus which may have emerged in the Carolina Press as to how they wanted to translate these concepts into specific political, strategic, economic, military, and racial policies. In that regard, perhaps some type of statistical analysis showing the relative weight of these types of considerations would be helpful.

Throughout the paper, I think Professor Leemhuis does a good job of demonstrating the complexity of South Carolina foreign policy attitudes. In the process, he challenges historians such as Christopher Lasch who argue that racism was the primary factor in Southern anti-imperialism. But again, some of the language used by the Carolina press as cited by Professor Leemhuis might lend itself to multiple interpretations. In their anti-imperialist writings, for example, some Carolina newspapers are cited as opposing annexation on the grounds that such a policy would violate "the genius of our institutions," alter the character of the nation, and undermine states rights.

While such statements may reflect simply an idealistic commitment to "liberty," "morality," and a "deep humanitarianism" they might also, in the absence of further definition, reflect less idealistic concerns. In the context of domestic politics, such phrases had sometimes been used as euphemisms for the preservation of white supremacy. Indeed, in the debate over annexation, some southerners used similar terms



with racial denotations. Commenting on the effect which annexation might have on the nation's democratic institutions, Senator John Daniel of Virginia stated that "the interjection of a race non-assimilable with the American people has been the fly in the ointment of American institutions, of American peace, of American history."<sup>2</sup> Senator Champ Clark of Missouri added:

"How can we endure our shame when a Chinese senator from Hawaii, with his pigtail hanging down his back, with his pagan joss in his hand, shall rise from his curule chair and in pigeon English proceed to chop logic with...Henry Cabot Lodge? O tempora, O mores!"<sup>3</sup>

On the manner in which anti-imperialism could constitute "humanitarianism" from a racist perspective, Senator Ben Tillman of South Carolina harangued the Senate:

"we understand and realize what it is to have two races side by side that cannot mix or mingle without deterioration and injury to both... coming as a senator from South Carolina with 750,000 colored population and only 500,000 whites, I realize what you are doing while you do not and I would save this country from the injection into it of another race question which can only breed bloodshed."<sup>4</sup>

Professor Leemhuis may be correct that racism was not the primary factor in the anti-imperialism of the South Carolina press. But in the light of the ambiguity of some of the terms they used, I think racism, in all of its complex ramifications, possibly could have been a little more important than this paper suggests.

In any event, I hope that these points I have raised do not obscure the fact that I enjoyed reading this paper and think that it has something to offer those of us interested in the history of South Carolina.



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<sup>1</sup>Robert Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>George M. Frederickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 306.

<sup>3</sup>H. Wayne Morgan, America's Road to Empire (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), p. 107.

<sup>4</sup>Christopher Lasch, "The Anti-Imperialists, the Philippines and the Rights of Man," Journal of Southern History, XXIV (August, 1958), pp. 319-331.



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